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WOMAN'S MINISTRY,

AND

OTHER PAPERS.

BY

REV. J. R. MILLER,

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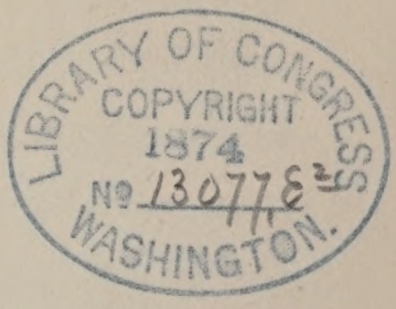

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PREFACE.

THESE papers have been written from time to time in the brief pauses of pastoral work. Some of them have appeared in the columns of various religious journals,—*The Sunday-School Times*, *The Presbyterian*, *The Presbyterian Banner*, or *The United Presbyterian*. Others have never been printed. By special request they are now collected, and published in book-form, in the hope that they may not be altogether without a ministry of good, in the homes which they may enter. The author would also state that he is not responsible for the insertion of the steel engraving.

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WOMAN'S MINISTRY,

AND

OTHER PAPERS.

Woman's Ministry.

THE personal ministry of woman forms one of the brightest and most beautiful chapters in the history of the human life of our dear Lord. Her hands wrought for him, all the way along his course, the most sacred and tender offices of love. She was faithful when all others had fled. We read of certain women who stood by his cross and were early at his sepulchre, that they had followed him all the way from Galilee, ministering unto him. And so women may yet follow Christ and minister to him. He still comes to our doors for bread. He

asks yet for a cup of cold water at the hands of love. Gentle fingers may yet weave garments for him to wear. Affection may still perform for him its sacred ministries. He is ever putting himself before us that we may serve him. To the consecrated heart all life is personal ministry to Jesus. He has identified himself in such a way with human life that everything we do, we do to him.

Woman owes much to Christianity. All that is noble, beautiful, exalted, refined, tender, and pure in her lot, she owes to Christ and his gospel. Every Christian woman has been doubly saved, and owes it to her Lord to bring the whole wealth of her love into his service. The tree drops its fruits into the lap of him who nurtures it. The vine bestows its purple clusters upon him who trains and tends it. The fields give their ripened sheaves into the bosom of him who tills the soil and sows the seed. Even the little flower that the dew-drop blesses, gives back to the heavens again its sweet offering of praise. And shall not those who owe so much to Jesus, bring the richest gifts of their hearts and hands and pour them out upon his altar?

Many spheres of ministry are open to Christian women. One is the care, training, and teaching of little children, not only in the home as mother, but as teacher in the Sabbath-school or weekday-school, or as missionary and friend. God gives no nobler work to mortal on the earth than that of fashioning the heart and life of a little child.

There are artists whose all-absorbing ambition is to paint a picture, which shall be hung up in some great gallery, to be admired by future ages. But Christian mothers and teachers of little children are permitted to work for a far more glorious immortality. Their work may have no praise among men. The world may never know when it looks upon the noble life, which has been fashioned in the lowly home or humble school-room, what hand gave it its beauty or its impulse. But eternity will declare it, and God will take care that the honor is bestowed where it belongs.

But this is not the only sphere open to Christian women. They can enter the homes of the ungodly, everywhere, and by their superior tact, quicker sympathy, gentler love,

and tenderer words, win their way, and win a way for their Lord, into hearts that have never before been opened to heavenly influences. The story of the Redeemer's love is never so sweet, so tender, so melting, as when it comes out of the depths of a woman's heart, through a woman's lips, baptized with a woman's tears. I have known hardened men, whom no sermon from the most eloquent preacher could ever have moved, softened to tenderness and penitential tears, as they listened to the burning words of love and the earnest pleadings of a Christian woman.

Then there is a great personal ministry of love-deeds which Christian women can do better than Christian men. God has given to them larger and more tender hearts than to men, a nobler wealth of affection, a sweeter tenderness, deeper sympathies, softer, gentler hands, and a greater power to bless, soothe, help, and comfort. And their very qualification for deeds of mercy is the seal of their ordination. It is their peculiar work to bear the blessings of charity to those who need. This work can best be performed — it seems to me that God meant it chiefly to be per-

formed — by the tender hearts and gentle hands of Christian women.

Much of the power of the Romish church may be traced to her gentle charities, wrought by womanly hands in the homes of poverty, and at the bedsides of the sick and dying. And why should not every Christian woman be a sister of mercy in the truest sense?

Many shrink from this work because they have not money to give. But money alone is the poorest alms ever bestowed. There are gifts which every true Christian woman, however poor, has to bestow, which are infinitely better than money. Christ never gave any money. We never read of him giving a mite to any who were poor or in distress. And yet no man was ever such a lavish giver of beneficence as he. The apostles gave no money. They had no silver nor gold to bestow. What Christ gave was love-service, pity, sympathy, compassion, tears, personal help. And these are the coins that the church should give chiefly. They are coins that bear the stamp of heaven. The image and superscription of Christ, our great King, are upon them. They were minted in heaven.

They are better than gold. Money is a poor thing to give without love,—

"For the gift without the giver is bare."

Money will not comfort the sad, nor cheer the lonely, nor lift up the fallen, nor strengthen the faint, nor succor the tempted, nor heal the broken-hearted, nor soothe weariness, nor wipe away tears. Love-gifts are what the poor, suffering, and sorrowing most need. And these heavenly coins the poorest may scatter. Let the Christian women of the church go out into the world, and repeat everywhere the tender, beautiful, helpful ministry of Christ, and they will do more to bless the world, than if they opened a mine of wealth and made thousands rich.

There was a little flower-plant, made to bloom in beauty, and shed sweet odors on the air. But it grew in the darkness. It became sickly and pale. Its leaves were soft and white. No flower burst out on its stem. It gave forth no sweetness.

Then a gentle hand came and opened a window, and let the sunbeams in. And the little plant lifted up its head, and smiled, and

was glad. The beauty came back. The greenness came into the leaves again. The frail stem grew strong. The flowers burst out in sweetness, and the air was filled with fragrance.

That is woman's work,—to let the sunshine in upon darkened hearts, upon languishing spirits, upon fading hopes, upon drooping lives.

There is no work so noble as this. There is not an angel in heaven whose heart does not thrill with joy when he is commissioned to come to this world to minister to some poor or needy one. Christ the Lord asked nothing nobler on earth than this, and he has made these lowly ministries forever glorious and divine.

Water the Roots.

IN these days of bustling Christian activities, is there not danger that we neglect the culture of our hearts? One Sabbath morning Wilberforce called upon Clarkson, and found him sitting among his papers, busily engaged upon his great emancipation schemes. He said to him, very earnestly, "Oh, Clarkson! do you ever think about your soul?" Clarkson replied, "Wilberforce, I have time to think about nothing now but these poor negroes."

And is there not danger that many who are absorbed in schemes of benevolence, may forget to look after their own souls? Is there not the same danger in the life of every Christian pastor and Christian worker? Is not the tendency of these days, even in the church, toward the cultivation of a working religion, oftentimes to the neglect of deep heart piety?

I have not one word to say against Christian activity. No one can do too much. But efficient activity can spring only from deep

heart religion. First, sit at Jesus' feet, and then ministry will follow as naturally as the harvest follows the sowing.

The Redeemer's own life was an example for our imitation, and never was there such a worker as he. All his energies were given out in unceasing activities. But his life had a root. He spent hours, oftentimes whole nights, in prayer. He was always full of the Holy Ghost, and went ever from silent and deep communion to his toils.

And the same is true of all the truly great workers who have ever toiled in the church. They took care of their own souls as the best and only true preparation for caring for the souls of others. Their grand developments of Christian energy were the regular outgrowths of fervent piety. They took root downwards, and bore fruit upwards. And so it must ever be. Efficient, continued, and fruitful activity can result only from a life that is hid with Christ in God.

What the church wants then, to-day, is not less Christian energy and activity,—it wants more. But that it may have more, it must first have more heart-life. A Christian life can

only be luxuriant and fruitful when its roots grow in a deep soil, and receive plentiful showers of spiritual influence.

And it is in the closet that the roots of Christian life grow. If there be no secret prayer, no silent communion, no personal living with God, there can be no genuine fruits of the Spirit. In many senses, the root is the most important part of the tree. Men do not see it. It is hidden under the ground. It gets no praise from men. Yet in the dark it works in silence, and in its secret laboratory it generates the life which goes up into the tree, and which manifests itself in trunk and branches, in foliage and fruits. The leaves are woven down in that dark earth-factory. The colors that tint the flowers are prepared down in that lowly workshop. The little blocks that are piled in silence, one by one, as the beautiful fabric of the tree goes up, are hewn out in the secret quarries of the roots. The fruits which every year hang in rich clusters on the branches draw all their richness and lusciousness from the roots. And if a tree droops and languishes, he that would revive it must look to the roots.

And these analogies hold true in the spiritual life. A man's secret and personal religious life is not that which the world sees, and praises, and understands; nor is it that which directly blesses and benefits the world. It is not a man's closet that is to be set upon a hill. But that there may be a beautiful, luxuriant and fruitful life in the sight of the world, there must be a secret, hidden root-life to nourish this visible growth. That a man may be active and useful as a Christian worker, he must first be wrought upon by the Divine Spirit.

Every active Christian life must have, therefore, for its counterpart, a close personal walk with God. The energy of the one must be balanced by the intenseness of the other. The danger is not that we work too much, but that we pray too little. It is to be feared that we have too many deserted or rarely-frequented closets. We take too little time for quiet, solitary communion with God. When we are hurried with duties, we take still less time for secret devotion. Our activity trenches upon our communion. Our work takes us away from our waiting.

It is right to give, but we must first receive from God, or how can we give? We must not go out to starving souls with an empty basket; we must wait at Jesus' feet until he fills our hands with bread.

We are so cumbered with much serving that we have no time to sit down to silent meditation. In our hurry for results we do not give God time to bring the fruits to perfection in our lives. We pluck them while green and unripe, and think to feed men with them thus. If we would be busy Marthas, we must first be waiting Marys. We must receive at God's hand before we distribute to the multitude.

Let us, then, see to it that our own souls are fed before we seek to feed others. Let us build our closets close to our pulpits and our fields of labor. Let us see that the roots are watered, and then we shall be fruitful trees indeed, our branches hanging full, and covered with beauty.

Dead at the Top.

MEN are like trees. The comparison holds in many regards; among others, with respect to growth. No tree starts tall, full-branched, fruit-covered, but is first only a seed, then a shoot, then a sapling, and finally a tree, but ever growing into nobler and more beautiful proportions. Though it live three thousand years, every year has its own circle of growth. When it ceases to grow, it ceases to live.

So men's bodies grow, beginning with the helplessness of infancy, and developing into strong and vigorous manhood.

So men's minds grow. All the germs of the mental faculties, of thought, and will, and feeling, are folded up in the infant. It is the work of a true education to draw out and train these faculties, which are capable of almost limitless expansion and development, and which will doubtless continue to grow forever in the future world.

Then there is still a higher life,—the life of

the soul. And no character is complete without its soul-growth. This is the part of our being on which the curse of the fall chiefly rests. The spiritual nature has been blasted by sin. Not until the new blood of redemption flows into the soul, is there life there. But provision has been made in grace for the quickening of these dead branches. Every soul united by faith to Christ, lives. And wherever there is spiritual life there is also spiritual growth.

But there are many men whose lower natures are marked by a luxuriant growth, whose higher, spiritual nature is starved and left to die. I have seen trees which cast a wide shade. Their lower branches reached far out and were covered with leaves, and gave to the tree the appearance of great prosperity. But when I have looked up toward the top, I have seen only a bare, dead, branchless, leafless trunk, rising above the greenness like the mast of a ship.

And that is a picture of many lives. In all that concerns the body or the mind,—in all the lower branches of the life-tree,—there is great prosperity. They are prosperous in the

lower or worldly sphere. They put forth great boughs, and spread themselves out wide, and send their life-blood pulsing through great business establishments and enterprises, or through whole communities, or cities, or states, or nations. They have a marvelous growth and development, but it is all low down, close to the earth. They make a great show of prosperity before the world. Men come and rest in the shadow of their great spreading branches, and eat of the fruit of their toil and care.

But when you turn your eyes up to the higher parts of their being, you see nothing but bare branches, with no leaves nor fruit. Like the tree, green and living below, but dead at the top, their souls stand out above all their earthly luxuriance, ghastly, bare, and dead.

Now it is well to develop one's physical nature, to draw out its powers to the utmost, and lay them on the altar for God. It is well to educate the mind, to train its power for the highest possible uses. Every one is responsible for the development and use of all the faculties God has lodged in his being.

But above both body and mind is man's spiritual nature. It is the crown of manhood. It is the part of our being which is nearest to heaven, which makes us akin to God, and which contains the germs of our future eternal growth toward bliss or woe. It is on this part of the life-tree that faith, hope, love, meekness, humility, patience, and all the Christian graces grow. It is at the top the Master looks for fruit.

And what matters it, then, that a man has the most wondrous growth and development in the lower branches of his life, if he is dead atop? What matters it that body and mind are clothed in luxuriance, if the soul is starved and bare?

Men should look to their spiritual nature. They should seek, first of all, soul-growth. No life is beautiful or complete in God's sight, which is leafless, fruitless, and dead or dying at the top. But the life that is *crowned* with foliage and fruitage here, shall be crowned with unfading glory in heaven.

The Best Business.

IT is "the Father's business." It should be the great business of every one who has been saved. Every heart that has been thrilled by the Saviour's love, should throb with love for the perishing. Every soul that has tasted of the bread of life, should hasten to offer it to others who are famishing. Every foot that has found the way of peace, should run after those whose steps take hold on hell. Every hand that has grasped the cross, should be reached out to rescue those who are swept away in sin's dark tides.

There are physicians who have no patients. There are lawyers who have no clients. There are business-men who have no business. There are working-men who have no work. But there should never be one Christian out of business. The Father's work offers employment for every one. There is no man too hard-worked to have his head, heart, and hand full of it. There is no one too ignorant,

or too lowly, to have a place in this field, next to some blessed angel. There is no child too young to work in the Father's business, just alongside of Jesus himself. As in the great city, there are thousands of different kinds of work—work for the skilled artist, for the educated man, for the tradesman, for the child—so there is work for every grade and kind of workman in the church of God.

There is something for you, dear reader, whoever you may be. There is some weary heart waiting, somewhere, for the word that hangs trembling on your tongue. There is a thirsty one, somewhere, longing for the cup of water which you can give. There is some sick one wasting away in a dark room, somewhere, wondering why you never come. There is some poor, discouraged one, somewhere, who needs your cheering words and your helpful love. You have a strong arm, and there are prisoners waiting for you to come to break their chains. There are hearts that seem hard as stone, which will melt when your hot love-tears fall upon them. There is work given to you, which will never be done until

you do it. There are souls which must perish, unless you go to them with the message of love.

Then the Father's business is *earnest* business. It is no pastime. It has to do with immortal souls, which must be saved, if ever, before they pass down into the shadows of death. Soon they will be gone, and then the word cannot be spoken; the cross cannot be held up before their eyes; the bread cannot be offered.

My sister traveled night and day, many hundred miles, to see another sister who was dying. And when she reached the house, they met her at the door, and said, "You are a few minutes too late. Ella has just died!" There are souls that are waiting for the coming of your feet—dying souls. If you hasten not, they must die in their sins.

It is a bitter thing when one has known an impenitent neighbor for years, and has not spoken once to him about his soul, to pass his house and see crape on his door; or to take up the morning paper and see that he is dead. It was a bitter cry that wailed forth from that father's heart, when he rushed into his pastor's

study and said, "Oh, sir, my daughter is dead, and she has never heard a word of prayer, nor a breath about her soul, from my lips!"

Close the eyes. Fold the arms upon the bosom. Smooth the tangles out of the hair. Put flowers on the coffin. Read the burial service over the body. Plant cypress on the grave. But all cannot soothe the anguish in the heart of him, who, after years of unimproved opportunities, came too late to do the Father's business, to offer eternal life to the lost soul.

Let every one do his work promptly. Answer every call of God's Spirit at once. To-morrow there may be crape on your friend's door,—or on yours,—and the deferred business may never be done.

There will be a *reckoning* in this business of the Father. The Lord is coming again to sum it all up, and to call every servant to account. It is a fearful responsibility to be great, to have great power, to have much money, to have large influence. Every shred of a gift from God must be accounted for.

Dear reader, when the Master comes to reckon with his servants, what will you have

to bring to his feet? He has given you money. He has given you a tongue to speak of his love. He has given you a soft and gentle hand to bind up the wounds of others, to lift up fallen ones, to bear up weak ones, to put the cup to burning lips, to smooth the wrinkles out of the brow of care. He has given you tender sympathy to feel for others' woes, to bear sweetness and comfort to homes of sorrow. He has put the gospel into your hands with pardons for guilty and condemned souls, with heavenly bread for the starving, with pillows for the sick, with staves for the lame and aged. What are you doing with your gifts for Christ? How will it be with you when the Master comes to reckon with his servants?

The Words of Christ.

WHAT wonderful things are the words of Christ! When a traveler comes home from some strange land, on which foot of traveler never trod before, how eagerly do men gather about him to listen to his story! If one of our beloved dead, who has been a few months or years with God, were to come back to our home again, with what rapt interest would we listen to every word he should speak about that heavenly land! If an angel were to come down from heaven into our streets, and speak in seraphic words of the wonderful things of God, what eager listeners would we be! How his words would enchain our thoughts, and linger in our minds and hearts!

But the words of Christ are stranger still. As we turn the gospel pages, and linger over the glorious truths that gleam and sparkle upon them, like diamonds in their settings of gold, or like stars in the midnight sky, we read, not the words of a returned traveler; not

the words of one come back from the dead; not the words of an angel who had worshiped a thousand ages before God's throne; but the words of One who had dwelt from eternity in the Father's bosom,—the living, spoken words of God himself.

There is a divine power in the words of Christ. Once one of them fell upon a stormy sea, and stilled it in a moment. One of them flew into the darkness of a sepulchre, where a dead man lay, touched his heart and started it to beating, and sent the frozen currents tingling, hot with new life, into every member of the dead body. One of them struck a barren tree and caused it to wither to the roots. Another gently touched a leprous body and healed it in a moment. The words of Christ were not mere empty sounds; they were full of divine life and energy.

And they have not lost their power through the ages. If you lean upon a word of Christ, you shall find Christ's mighty arm under it. If you are sinking in the waves of trial, and reach out your hand of faith and grasp one of these blessed words, you shall find the hand of Christ gloved in it, and shall be held up.

If you are pursued by the fierce enemies of your soul, and flee for refuge behind a word of promise, you shall find yourself in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty. If you are weary, or in trouble and sorrow, and pillow your head upon one of these precious words, you shall find that you are lying upon the bosom of your heavenly Father, and shall feel the warm beatings of his heart. If you are alone in darkness or trial, and grasp some sweet word of love, you shall find that you are leaning upon the arm of the Beloved. You may take these words into your heart, and you shall have Christ there too.

We are told to let "the Word of Christ dwell in us." The human soul is a house. It has many rooms. Some are in the basement where the lower passions and appetites lurk. Some are high up with an outlook on heaven, where faith, hope, the affections and devotion dwell.

When a man buys a house, he wants the keys of every apartment. Christ has bought the soul-house, and his Word claims possession of every chamber, every room, every closet.

In old castles, and other stately mansions in the old world, there would be a little chapel where God was worshiped on Sabbaths,—a little room set apart for God,—while the whole of the great building besides, was devoted to the uses of the owner of the mansion. And often there would scarcely be a door opened to God, even formally, in that whole great mansion, except the little chapel door. And there are many men who want to have merely a little chapel for Christ in one corner of their heart, while they lock every other door against him. They are willing to let "the Word of Christ" regulate their praying, and praising, and church-going, and whatever belongs to the specifically religious part of their life. But when they see it coming toward the door of their counting-room, or safe, or workshop, or when it comes in to control their business or their pleasures, or to regulate their general life, they shut the door in its face, and turn the key quickly, protesting against such "unwarrantable interference." They do not believe in mixing up religion and business.

But the blessed word of Christ will not stay in any mere chapel in a man's heart. It will

dwell only as master. If it has not full possession of your soul, holding every key; if it cannot go into every chamber, and be master everywhere; if it cannot control your business, your pleasures, your tempers, your lips, your appetites, your whole life,—it will shake the dust off its feet, and, weeping over your deserted heart, will write "Ichabod!" upon the closed doors.

The Word of Christ will be no mere lodger. It must possess the soul, driving out every profane occupant, cleansing and beautifying every unhallowed chamber, living and ruling in every faculty, feeling, and affection. No man can live two lives, have two dwellers in his heart, serve two masters. The word of Christ is the voice of the living Christ, who sits nowhere if not on the throne. Let this blessed Word *dwell in you*, ruling, guiding, transforming. As one opens his windows and doors, on a sweet summer's morning, to let the fragrant air and pure sunshine flow into every corner of his dwelling, so open your hearts to the blessed, sweetening, enriching, and purifying Word of Christ. It will beautify your whole life. It will bring heavenly fragrance

into your soul. It will cheer and gladden you. It will strengthen and help you. It will lighten your darkness. It will comfort your sorrow. It will change you into the image of God.

The Author and Finisher.

EVERY believer is to be transformed into the image of Christ. Hence we are enjoined to grow up into him in all things. Whatever temper, affection, disposition, or propensity there is in us unlike Christ, is to be brought into harmony. The soul of man is like a musical instrument whose chords are jangled and out of tune. The work of sanctification is to bring the whole life into harmony with itself, and with the perfect soul of Christ. There are, however, mistaken views of the manner in which this is accomplished.

Thus we are said to be sanctified through the means of grace. And a man has a hasty temper, or a grasping, worldly spirit, or a selfish heart, or finds himself in some way far

below the model which Christ has given for imitation. He wants to become better, and reads so many chapters a day in his Bible, prays night and morning, and attends the church services regularly for a few weeks, and expects to find his evil traits and qualities disappearing in some mysterious way.

Now these means of grace are meant of God for blessing to our souls. The Saviour's prayer to the Father for his disciples was, "Sanctify them through thy truth." The Word of God is adapted to the sanctification of our natures. It holds ever before us the pure and holy character of God. It is a mirror, in which we may see ourselves as we are, with all our spots and blemishes. It holds forth ever before us, also, the pure and spotless image of Christ, into which we are to be fashioned. It is fitted thus to be a means of sanctification. And so of all the ordinances of the house of prayer. And yet they have no power of sanctification alone. A man may enjoy them all his life, may literally live in them, and become no whit better. It is only when the Spirit works in and through them that they have sanctifying power.

Then it is taught that afflictions and trials tend to sanctification. One of God's best schools on earth is the school of trial; and he employs no better teachers than the stern, severe, and seemingly harsh masters, disappointment, sorrow, loss, pain. We know that Christ's humanity grew up in this school. We know God has ordained that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. We know that as fire purifies gold, so affliction refines and purifies God's dear golden ones. We know that as the photographic artist, when he would bring out the features of his picture, carries the plate into a dark room, where no ray of sunlight falls, so God often makes the room very dark about the souls of his children, that he may better develop his own image in them. Many a Christian comes out of a sore sickness or a great sorrow better than he entered.

And because that God employs these trials and afflictions so much as his servants, and blesses them so often, many persons have the impression that they possess some inherent power of sanctification,— that they always make men better. But such is not the case.

The natural tendency of trial is to destroy. And there is many a bereavement or loss that falls upon the soul like a frost upon a garden, destroying its fairest flowers. It is generally supposed that even the ungodly are made better by sorrows; but, on the other hand, sorrow only hardens the heart of an ungodly man. The same sun blesses the branch on the tree and withers the severed branch. So the same affliction blesses the man who is abiding in Christ, and destroys the man who has no vital relation to Christ. It is only the follower of Christ to whom afflictions become ministers of good, and to him only when the Spirit of God comes in them and blesses them to his heart.

Then it is not the affliction itself that blesses; it is the Spirit that works through the affliction. The dark storm-cloud passes over the earth, and the springs are fresher, the fields are greener, the flowers are more fragrant. It is not the angry cloud that blesses the springs, and fields, and flowers,—it is the gifts of rain which the clouds bring in their dark folds from God. So it is not the cloud or storm of trial that blesses the soul, but the influences of his

Spirit which he sends by these dark-mantled messengers.

Others understand that it is by their own efforts and struggles that they grow up into the full Christian stature. They are always quoting this text, "Work out your own salvation;" but they forget to finish the verse, "for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." There are many who have been resolving and struggling for years to overcome some temper, or appetite, or affection, and who are no nearer victory than when they began. Such efforts are useless and futile. And the lesson which I would seek to impress on my readers is this, that only the Spirit of God can transform us into the image of God. We must be content to let the Spirit take away our spots, overcome the evil in us, and produce in us the features and principles of the new life.

What is Christian life? Is it not essentially the dwelling of the Divine Spirit in the heart? "Christ liveth in me." What, then, is sanctification? It is not the mere patching, painting, and adorning of the old nature, but the growth of the new divine life in the soul.

When a seed falls into the ground it dies. There is a germ of life in it which grows up into a plant or tree; but the seed itself dies and remains in the earth. So the old nature is not to go into heaven, or to be trained for glory. It dies, and the Christ born in us at regeneration is what grows up into divine beauty.

Sanctification, then, is simply the Spirit of God in us taking more and more full possession of our hearts, ruling more and more in us, and displacing more and more the old occupant. It is the Christ-child in our heart waxing mightier and stronger every day, and growing up into noble manhood. And that is not our work. The Spirit in us needs no human help to grow. If you would then be sanctified; if you seek purity, nobleness, strength, and beauty of soul, learn that all you have to do is to give yourself up to God, to throw wide open every chamber of your heart to him, to let him have free access and full sway in your life, and to look to him alone for sanctification.

Christ is the master of your soul-house. He is adorning and beautifying it for himself,

for his own temple. He knows just how he wants it, and he needs no help from you. Indeed, your unskilled hands would only mar his work. The artist wants no clumsy fingers to help him paint his picture, or even add one touch to it. Nor does this Divine artist want a single human touch on any of his pictures. When you find a spot take it to Christ, and ask him to wash it out, for *you* cannot. When you find some troublesome temper, or habit, or disposition, do not waste time by trying to overcome it yourself; take it at once to Christ. Remember ever that *Christ is living in you*, that he is the author and finisher of his own work in your soul, and that the best and only way you can help him is to leave it all to him, and to yield up your whole self into his hands to be moulded and fashioned at his will.

David's prayer for purity is the model. It was not that God would *help him* to overcome his sinfulness, but "Purge *thou* me with hyssop and I shall be clean. Wash *thou* me, and I shall be whiter than snow. *Create thou in me* a clean heart." Here lies the secret of peace. This lesson is the key to the true

higher life. Our sanctification is not our work but God's. Let the hand divine print the likeness divine upon your heart; wash out all the spots; smooth down all the asperities; overcome all the evil; bring out all the hidden beauties and heavenly features, and take your poor, blurred, blotted, marred, and ruined life, and fashion it into the full image of the Redeemer. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," saith the Lord.

A Plant that Needs Culture.

WE do not know how much our friends do for us, how they help us, how they bless us, how much they add to our joy, how much of our prosperity we owe to them, what they do toward the formation and up-building of our character. Even the friend of an hour, whom we meet on railroad or steamboat, or at the house of a friend, or amid the busy scenes of life,—as when two ships meet on the broad sea, speak each other and pass on, never to meet again,—we know not what blessings

he brings to us from God, nor how that transient and casual meeting affects our whole after-life. We know not what touches, delicate and beautiful, upon the canvas of our soul there will be forever, which the fingers of that chance friend left there. Every soul that touches ours leaves its impression upon us. I know that I get good from every pure, gentle, genial companion even of a few moments. How much more, then, from the friend who walks by my side, and whose friendship sings sweet songs in my ear and heart for years and years! There will be a silver thread in every life-web when it is finished, woven into the tissue by the friendship of many days. And there will be a touch of beauty on the canvas, put there by every good and holy hand that has ever been laid upon us in momentary greeting or benediction.

It was a beautiful fancy of the poet when he said that the song he had breathed into the air he found again from beginning to end, long, long afterward, in the heart of a friend. So friendship is ever breathing its sweet songs into the air; and so, too, it shall find them all again, from beginning to end, in the hearts

upon which they fall. Nothing that love does is ever lost. The time we spend with pure and good friends in sacred communings, or in the cultivation and deepening of noble friendships, is not lost. It brings us not only passing enjoyment, but permanent blessing.

There is special need of this lesson in these times. The tendency of everything is toward material results. Time which does not yield dollars and cents is set down as lost. Men know of no way of becoming rich but by accumulating gold and silver. The basis of social life is sadly mercenary. People even marry for money,—or at least demand the money qualification as a *sine qua non.*

Men are too busy to have or maintain friendships. Many are so absorbed in business that they have not time even for the cultivation and enjoyment of their own home loves. I have read of a boy who wanted his mother to ask some favor for him of his father. And when the mother suggested that he might ask for himself, the boy replied, "I would, but I don't feel well enough acquainted with father." I suspect there are a great many children who are not well acquainted

with father. Possibly there are even some wives whose acquaintance with their husbands is very limited. Many men only see their families at an early and hurried breakfast and a late supper. They spend no quiet hours with them in cultivating and deepening the home affections. They never romp with the children. They do not join in the home cheer. Their voices are never heard in the home songs. They do not share in the home confidences. They may be brilliant men in society. They may flash and sparkle in a neighbor's drawing-room. They may be all life and vivacity in business circles. But at home every door of their hearts is locked. They are like frowning, bristling forts, stern, silent, and awful, in their own houses, in the presence of those who are nearest and dearest to them.

Now no man has a right to be a bear anywhere, much less at home. Home should be a place of tender love, sacred confidences, and the interplay of holy affections. A man should bring the best of everything there, his sweetest courtesies, his gentlest kindnesses, his best thoughts, his holiest confidences. There he

should ever appear at his best. If he must have dreary, sullen moods, let him have them in his store or counting-room, where they will not cast deep shadows over the hearts that look up to him for sunshine. In the circle of his own loved ones a man should open every gate of his heart, not only that his most sacred feelings and affections may flow out, but that his dear ones may enter into the holiest chambers of his soul. He owes it to the wife, who has lavished the boundless wealth of her love upon him, and whom he swore at the altar to cherish tenderly forever. It is not enough that he loves her—his love should find expression. It should beam in his countenance, sparkle in his eye, flow out in his words, live in his touch. It is well enough to tell us on a dark, cloudy day that the sun is shining away, bright as ever, above the clouds, but we all know how dreary such a day is, and how much better is the day of cloudless beauty. A great many men with a wealth of tender affection are like very cloudy days. The sunshine never breaks through.

Every man owes it to his children to give time to the cultivation of home love, and to

bring his heart's richest treasures there. It is sad to see a child weeping over a father's coffin. But it is scarcely less sad to see a child who knows nothing of a living father's love, growing up in ignorance of the wealth of affection that lies so close to its young heart. Many fathers complain of their children's want of love and honor for them, and confidence in them. May not the reason be found here? Their own hearts were shut against them in their childhood days. They never drew out the love of their young hearts or sought to win their confidence; and now they pay the penalty, and call it ingratitude in their children. Men should seek to have their children anchored to them by all the cords of love in their hearts. They should cultivate the home affections most assiduously and tenderly. They should never be too busy to give many hours of every week to the loved ones who cluster closest around their hearts.

Time thus spent is not wasted. No hours yield such rich returns. No capital is so valuable as that a man has in the hearts of others. He is a very poor man who has millions of gold, and no friends. He is very rich who

has no money, but who comes home in the evening and sits down in the midst of a circle of loving ones, knowing that his name is carried in the core of all their hearts. No panic can ever touch such wealth. His banks will never suspend. Disasters cannot rob him, but like the mountain freshets only lay bare new veins of gold. Then a man can carry these treasures with him into the other world. For love lives on through death.

Every wise man will seek to have friends. He will take time to cultivate friendships, and to make them deep and permanent. A selfish man or a man of irritable temper, and harsh, ungoverned speech cannot keep friends, for there are no flowers so sensitive to the frosts as human affections are to selfishness, bitterness, or anger.

It costs much to have friends and to cultivate and maintain deep friendships. One must give in order to receive, and give as much as he receives. Heart must go out to meet heart. Life must clasp life. Soul must be knit to soul.

But the blessings of friendship repay a thousand times its cost. They spring up, per-

petual fountains of comfort and gladness in the heart. They make a man rich when he has lost all else. They build up a refuge for him, when the days of darkness and adversity come, and in the feebleness and helplessness of old age. They hold him up when he is in danger of falling. They keep him always young in heart and in hope. They beautify his soul. They begin heaven here below for him.

How important, then, that we have friends! How important that we have good and pure friends! An impure hand stains the soul on which it is laid. Many a character carries a blot through life which an hour's companionship left upon it. Many a life-web is marred and spoiled by the threads which unworthy and defiling friendships weave into it through the years. But the friendship of the pure and noble purifies, ennobles, adorns, beautifies, exalts.

Post-Mortem Love.

WHY is it that so many people keep all their pleasant thoughts, and kind words about a man, bottled and sealed up until he is dead, when they come and break the bottle over his coffin, and bathe his shroud in fragrance? Many a man goes through life with scarcely one bright, cheering, encouraging, helpful word. He toils hard and in lowly obscurity. He gives out his life freely and unstintedly for others. I remember such a man. He was not brilliant; he was not great; but he was faithful. He had many things to discourage him. Troubles thickened about his life. He was misrepresented and misunderstood. Everybody believed that he was a good man, but no one ever said a kindly or pleasant thing to him. He never heard a compliment, scarcely ever a good wish. No one ever took any pains to encourage him, to strengthen his feeble knees, to lighten his burdens, or to lift up his heart by a gentle

deed of love, or by a cheerful word. He was neglected. Unkind things were often said of him.

I stood by his coffin, and then there were many tongues to speak his praise. There was not a breath of aspersion in the air. Men spoke of his self-denials, of his work among the poor, of his good qualities, of his quietness, his modesty, his humility, his pureness of heart, his faith and prayer. There were many who spoke indignantly of the charges that falsehood had forged against him in past years, and of the treatment he had received. There were enough kind things said during the two or three days that he lay in the coffin, and while the company stood around his open grave, to have blessed him and made him happy all his fifty years, and to have thrown sweetness and joy about his soul during all his painful and weary journey. There was enough sunshine wasted about that black coffin and dark grave, to have made his whole life-path bright as clearest day. But his ears were closed then, and could not hear a word that was spoken. His heart was still then, and could not be thrilled by the grateful

sounds. He cared nothing then for the sweet flowers that were piled upon his coffin. The love blossomed out too late. The kindness came when the life could not receive its blessing.

And I said then that I would not keep all my kind words, and all my pleasant thoughts and feelings, about my neighbor, locked up in my breast till he is dead. They will do him no good then. He will not need them then. His dead hand cannot feel the warm pressure. Gentle words will not make his pale, cold face glow. It will be too late, when he lies in the coffin, to seek to make him happy, to lift the shadows off his life, or to brighten his path.

It was a beautiful thing that the country did on Decoration-day. The gardens were stripped of their flowers. Hundreds of thousands of graves were strewn with the richest sweetness and fragrance of earth. Many words were spoken of the dead. Their valor was praised. Their heroism was lauded. Their brave and gallant deeds were recounted. Orators exhausted the resources of language to find words strong enough, and beautiful

enough, to weave into garlands for their brows. And it was well. It was a fit and noble thing to do. It is well, too, to build monuments to mark the spots where our dear dead sleep, and to inscribe upon them the sacred names. The memory of a sweet and beautiful life should be kept ever green and fresh in our hearts; and there is no richer tribute to a life than the sincere witness of sorrowing friends around the coffin and the grave. It is well that even death has power to stop the tongue of detraction; to subdue enmities, jealousies, and animosities; to reveal all the beauties and excellences of a man's character; to hide his blemishes and defects; and to thaw out the tender thoughts and kindly feelings of his neighbors' hearts.

But meantime there is a great host of weary men and women toiling through life toward the grave, who need cheering words and helpful ministries. The incense is gathering to scatter about their coffins; but why should it not be scattered in their paths to-day? The kind words are lying in men's hearts and trembling on their tongues, which will be spoken by-and-by when these weary ones are

sleeping; but why should they not be spoken now, when they are needed so much, and when their accents would be so pleasing and grateful?

It costs but little to give men a great deal of joy and help. One brought a bunch of flowers to my table, and for a whole week they filled my room with fragrance. One wrote me a cheering letter, breathing a spirit of gratitude and love. It came when I was weary and depressed, and was like the meal prepared by the angel for the old prophet. I went on its blessed strength for many days. One met me on the street and spoke an encouraging word and grasped me warmly by the hand; and for hours I felt that warm grasp and heard that word echoing through my soul. A little child may brighten scores of lives every day. There is not one of us who may not gladden and strengthen many a heart between every rising and setting sun. Why should we not live to bless the living, to cheer the disheartened, to sweeten cups that are bitter, to hold up the hands that hang down, to comfort those that mourn, to bear joy into joyless homes? Kind words will not spoil a

man. If a sermon helps you it will do the preacher no harm to tell him so. If the editor writes an article that does you good, he can write a still better one if you send him a word of thanks. If a book blesses you, do you not owe it to the author to write him a grateful acknowledgment? If you know a weary or neglected one, would it not be such work as angels do, would it not be Christ-like work, to seek every opportunity to brighten and bless that life? Do not wait till the eyes are closed, the ears deaf, and the heart stilled. Do it now. Post-mortem kindnesses do not cheer the burdened spirit. Flowers on the coffin cast no fragrance backward over the weary days.

To Young Disciples.

YOU are just entering upon your Christian course. You have felt the strivings of the Holy Spirit within you, and have yielded to them. You have heard the "still, small voice" of Jesus calling you, and have turned to follow him. You have heard the sweet bidding of divine love speaking from the midst of the sorrowful scenes of the night of betrayal, and saying, "Do this in remembrance of me;" and, obeying this command, you are coming to the sacramental table. I desire to impress upon your minds this lesson, that the whole of your Christian life hereafter is to be simply remembering and obeying the words of the Lord Jesus. The voice that called you first into being, and that has now called you a second time into life, spiritual life, you will hear day by day, hour by hour, and moment by moment, ever calling you forward to new duties, to fresh efforts and struggles, to higher

achievements, to nobler and more Christ-like life.

Do not think that the work is all done. It is only begun. God has breathed his forgiveness upon your past life, but his voice to you is, Go and sin no more. He has kindled within you a spark of his own Spirit; he has put a germ of his own life in your soul; but he would have you grow up into the full measure of the stature of Christ. He has touched you with a longing for goodness and spiritual beauty, but he would lead you up to a full realization of all the sweet thoughts, hopes, and yearnings that to-day stir in your breasts. He has given you a taste of the joys that spring out of a sense of pardoned sin, and from communion with himself, but he would lead you up the mountain-side, higher and higher, until you drink at the fountain-head, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures evermore. He has printed his own image upon your soul; the features are very dim and faint to-day; but he would lead you in the paths of holiness until your lives cast off all their imperfection, and bud and blossom in all the sweetness of heavenly

perfection, in the complete, unblemished likeness of your dear Lord. Your new life is but a grain of mustard-seed as yet, and it is to grow until it becomes a great tree, with deep root, tall trunk, wide-spreading branches, and rich fruits. You are but babes in Christ now, and you are to develop into strong men and women, with noble powers, ripened beauty, and lives of blessed usefulness.

And all these things are to be reached, all these joys are to be experienced, all these sublime attainments are to be gained, simply by remembering and obeying the words of the Lord Jesus. He will call and you are to follow. He will call you away from all that is wrong, from all imperfection, from all evil habits, from all sin. He will call you to virtue, to truth, to love. You shall hear his voice of tenderness in the darkness as well as in the light, in the roar of winter's tempest as well as in the quiet summer evening hush. Sometimes he will call you where the flowers bloom and the birds sing sweetly; sometimes into the desert where there is no beauty and no voice of joy; sometimes he will lead you gently by the flowing streams, under the shade

of fragrant trees; sometimes up among the misty mountains, or across the stormy billows toward unknown shores. He may often call you away from your own pleasure. He may lead you in paths that are thorny. He may give you duties that seem too hard for you. He may call you into conflict, into grief, into chambers of sickness, into paths that are darkened by the deep shadows of adversity.

What I want to say to you is, that you may always trust him. You may safely follow where he leads. You need never fear to obey him, though, like Abraham, he call you to bring to his altar your dearest and most precious joy. He will never call you into any wrong path. He will never demand a sacrifice which has not in it a blessing for your soul. He will ever lead you upwards to sweeter fellowship, calmer peace, deeper joy, holier life, fairer beauty, grander strength, and greater usefulness.

My heart yearns for you with a tenderness and a love which I cannot express. And those yearnings are for this, not merely that you may be saved, but that your Christian lives may be beautiful and holy, that you may stand

perfect and complete in all the will of God. I want to see you rise above the common mass of Christians, and shine with a richer lustre. And there is no way that your lives can be made so beautiful, so fair, so lovely, so blessed and full of blessing, as by remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, by keeping your hearts full of them, by feeding upon them until their sweetness fills your whole soul and flows out in every word you speak, in every thing you do, in every influence of your life.

Somewhere I have heard this little fable: One digging in the earth found a little lump of fragrant, perfumed clay, and asked, "Where did you come from? Where did you get your fragrance?" "One laid me on a rose," said the little piece of clay. So the life that remembers ever the words of the Lord Jesus will be struck through with the fragrance of heaven, for these words are flowers gathered in the heavenly gardens and borne down to earth. And he that lives amid them, and ever breathes their sweetness, will have a life perfumed by the odors of heaven.

Men who come from Jesus.

THERE are men who seem to be so full of divine influences that wherever they go they carry blessings. There is a strange power in their simplest words which thrills every heart. There is a warm glow in their faces which seems like the outshining of a great altar fire, or a hot furnace of love in their bosoms. There is an unction in their prayers which takes hold of men's souls and lifts them up into the bosom of God. Their very presence brings a heavenly atmosphere. Their lives have a holy fragrance. And if you ask for the secret you shall find it to be this—*they have been with Jesus.* They live with him; they abide in him; and wherever they go, they go right from his bosom.

These are the mighty ones of the earth. They live hard by the gates of heaven, and when they come to us they bring their hands and their hearts full of rich blessings fresh from God. When a man comes in from out-

side on a cold, wintry day, he brings winter with him on his garments. But when one comes from a flower garden into your chamber, he brings fragrance with him. So when a man comes from communing with Jesus in "the ivory palaces," "all his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." He walks in the garden of God and comes with garments perfumed. Like the men who bore the Eshcol grapes from the vine-clad hills of Canaan, back into the wilderness, he comes, laden with ripe clusters of the fruits, which, with his own hands, he has gathered upon the heavenly fields. He comes as a vessel, a vessel only of wood, or of clay, it may be, but a vessel fresh from the fountain, and full to the brim of the sweet waters of grace.

When these men who come from Jesus sit down by the bedside of the sick, they have something to offer, besides the common courtesies of friendship, or even the tender words of human sympathy and love. They have a word from God's own lips. They bring a message from the King. They bear healing waters drawn from the deep well of life. When they sit down beside the mourner, they have

something better than the world's cold comfort to present. They bring promises which shine like lamps in the gloom, and cast their bright beam far into the gloomy depths of sorrow. When they sit down beside the tempted, tried, almost fainting one, they have something better to offer than human counsel, or a weak human arm. When they stand before hungry hearts, they have something better than stones to give. They have been with Jesus and they bring the "hidden manna" from the sanctuary. When they go out among the great needs and wants of human hearts, they go with their hands full of spiritual gifts. They live so near to the gates of heaven that they catch the accents of the angels' songs, and then come and sing them in men's homes, to cheer the sad and weary of earth. They are on such intimate terms with Jesus that he reveals to them many of the precious secrets of his love, and then they come and tell them to others who are burdened.

There is no power to be compared for a moment with spiritual power. Pompey boasted that with one stamp of his foot he

could rouse all Italy to arms. But with all his power he could not have comforted a mourner, nor dried a tear, nor lifted up a fainting one, nor led a lost soul to light. The achievements of physical power will perish. The things that mighty men do will pass away. The cities men build will crumble. The thrones men rear will topple and fall. But the things wrought by spiritual power will endure forever.

They say that a word breathed into the air goes on and on forever, in infinite vibrations through the fields of space. This may be a mere vagary of the scientists, but certain it is that good words once spoken will go on forever in human hearts. Songs sung into the ears of sorrow or care will go singing on eternally. A touch of beauty on a human soul will never fade, nor be rubbed out. Joys started deep in men's hearts by spiritual truths will never die. The things which are done in the name of Christ, and through the power of his grace, will last forever. I would rather be the obscurest servant in all God's field, and have spiritual power and live to bless, to comfort, to heal, to cheer, to lift up,

to feed, and to point souls to the Lamb of Calvary, than be the mightiest emperor on the globe, ruling over half a continent. This power can be gained. God will give it to his lowliest. But it can be obtained only in one way. Wealth will not give it. The universities cannot confer it. Genius has it not among its treasures. It is not got in military academies. It is not one of the jewels of the king's crown. It can only be had by being with Jesus. Live with him, commune with him, sit at his feet, lie on his bosom, go out daily and hourly from his presence, and you will be clothed with spiritual power.

"When one that holds communion with the skies
Has filled his urn where those pure waters rise,
And once more mingles with us meaner things,
'Tis e'en as if an angel shook his wings;
Immortal fragrance fills the circuit wide,
That tells us whence his treasures are supplied."

A Living Christ.

IT has been suggested that one of the faults of much evangelical preaching is the too exclusive presentation of a suffering, dying, dead, and buried Christ, rather than of a risen, living, ever-sympathizing, ever-helping Christ. This fault results from the desire to hold forth "Christ crucified" as the one, only ground of salvation. But the consequence too often is, that the only conception of the Saviour produced in the minds of the people, is that of One who suffered and died. They are led to trust for salvation to the one past act of redemption, rather than to the power of an ever-present Saviour. Their eyes are turned back to the cross, rather than up to the throne.

A little reflection will satisfy any one that the conception of a living Christ is not a vivid and powerful one in the minds of the mass of Christians. Somehow they read the beautiful and tender gospel story, and look back upon it as something in the far past, which belongs

to them only as a bundle of sweet and fragrant memories. They think of Jesus very much as of a dear friend they have lost, or as one who lived centuries ago a noble life of self-sacrifice, but who lives no longer. His history is all they have. They read his tender words of love, follow him in his gentle ministries, and learn to love him. Then they come to his cross, and that seems to be the end. His voice is heard no more. His hand ministers no more in homes of need. His feet come no more on love errands. They gather up the precious memories and cherish them most sacredly. They wish that they had lived when he was on the earth, or that he would come again and repeat that wondrous life that they might enjoy its blessings. But to them he is dead. They have not the consciousness of his living presence with them.

Now the Scriptures are at great pains to present Christ as a living Saviour. The infinite importance of his death is everywhere recognized; but mark how all the New Testament writers labor to remove every shadow of doubt from the fact that he rose again, and

how his resurrection is held forth as the most important fact in his history, the very foundation of all gospel truth and of all Christian hope.

His frequent appearances after his resurrection were meant to produce and confirm in the minds of his disciples a most vivid conception of himself as living again. He sought to blot out of their minds the thought of a dead Master, which had so filled their hearts with despair while he lay in the grave, and to impress upon them by never-to-be-forgotten incidents the truth that he was really alive. And the apostles carried that conception, that glorious consciousness, with them into all their work and all their perils. To them Jesus was as truly alive and as really with them while they preached and suffered, as he ever was during the brief years of his human presence.

Then all the presentations of the epistles and especially of the Book of Revelation are most vivid pictures of a living Christ. Very little is said about a dying Christ, but a great deal about him who "ever liveth."

Now, no one believes or preaches that he is dead. I am only speaking of the way he is

held forth as a Saviour, saving men by his death on the cross, rather than by the power of his life. Is Christ presented so as to produce in the minds and hearts of believers a vivid conception of a living person, ever caring for them, ever with them? Do they think of him as a Saviour who performed the whole of their salvation-work nineteen centuries ago when he gave his life for them, or as a Saviour who is saving them by his strong arm, moment by moment?

A vivid realization of Christ as living is essential to noble Christian life. How easy it is to go to the throne of grace when we feel that on that throne sits that same Jesus whose tender and beautiful life is delineated on the gospel pages! We remember how compassionate, how pitiful, how kind he was, and how easy it was to go to him, and how lovingly he received all who came unto him, never turning one away unblest. If he is the God who hears our prayers and listens to the recital of our griefs and cares, how boldly we can come to him! The thought of that "same Jesus" on the heavenly throne, as the God with whom we have to do, is a precious one.

He is there as our advocate to manage all our affairs for us; he is there to prepare a place for us, and to receive us when we go home. It is a sweet thought when you are called to send your little child out of your warm bosom into the darkness of the unseen world, that Jesus receives it in his arms, and that henceforth it is in his care. It is a comforting thought when things seem to go wrong with you, that it is the Jesus of Bethany and Calvary who presides over the affairs of providence. It was a glorious joy when Stephen was dying to see that "same Jesus" standing with open arms to receive him. And his eyes merely saw what is real with every dying believer. These joys are lost when there is not in the heart a clear consciousness of a living Christ.

Then there is still a further blessing which springs out of the faith that realizes a living Christ. It is the consciousness of that Saviour's presence with each believer all the time. Many persons realize that he lives in heaven, and manages their affairs for them, and will receive them at last; but fail to realize the glorious truth of his abiding presence with

them. There is no promise of the Scriptures repeated over and over again so often as this: "I will be with thee—I am with thee always." Jesus has not left the earth. He never will leave it for a moment till the last child has reached the heavenly Father's home. More precious still—he never for a moment leaves the side of any one believer, from the hour of his conversion till he enters heaven to go no more out forever. That is the way Jesus saves his people, by his abiding presence with them.

It is the consciousness of this we need. It is true, but how many realize it? And if not realized it avails us nothing in our hours of need. Mary's heart was breaking in the garden while Jesus stood close beside her, because she did not know that he was with her. What a world of comfort and joy came into her heart with the consciousness that he stood by her side! In all the Christian's sorrows and trials Jesus is with him. What he wants is to believe this, to realize it. Faith makes it a real presence, and what more does any one need?

For three years the veil that hides God from our eyes was lifted to give us a manifestation of his perpetual presence and ministry

of love among men. The gospel record is but a few pages torn out of the history of a life that has been going on upon the earth since the creation, and will go on until the end. We have Christ with us as really as the disciples had. The sinner that comes fresh from his sins can find, not atonement merely, but the bosom of divine love. The mourner can find, not words of comfort only, but the sympathy and tender heart of the Comforter. The tempted, fainting believer can find, not promises of strength merely, but the same living, mighty hand that Peter found when he began to sink in the waves. The lost sinner, crying out, finds not merely the assurance of pardon and life, but he finds himself lifted up by the good shepherd and borne gently along to the fold.

The Nether Springs.

WHEN Caleb's daughter found that her field had no springs of water, she came to her father, and he gave her "the upper springs and the nether springs." So God gives his children two sets of springs, the nether and the upper. Religion has "the promise of the life that now is" as well as "of that which is to come." He gives us springs which burst out on the earth. He bestows rich spiritual blessings and comforts upon us in this life. He sends rills and rivers of grace through our poor, parched, sorrow-smitten earthly portion, fertilizing and enriching it. Who can begin to enumerate the blessings which religion brings into our lives, even in this world?

There are those who think that the Christian's life is cheerless and gloomy, empty of happiness and joy. But is it so? Let us see what religion brings. It brings the revelation of the love of God. Is it a gloomy thought

to a man that God loves him, that he loves him with an everlasting love, with a love infinitely deeper and more tender than a mother's love, with a love that never changes, and whose warm currents no unfaithfulness, no wandering, no imperfection, can chill or turn back? Religion brings redemption. Is it a gloomy thing to a weary prisoner to go out of his dark dungeon and find himself in the open fields, in the sweet sunshine, enjoying all the blessings of liberty? And does it make a man sad, does it darken his life, to be led out of Satan's gloomy prison-house into the glorious liberty of the children of God? Religion brings full and complete salvation. And is it a gloomy thought to know that you are saved from eternal perdition, and have everlasting life?

Religion brings peace. In the midst of a great battle, while a thousand cannon shook the hills, and the whole heaven quivered with the reverberations, there was a moment's pause. Not a gun was heard far or near. And during that pause a sparrow sang sweetly out from the branches of an old tree that stood in the midst of the plain of battle. When the can-

non thundered again the sparrow was silent. It only sang in the brief pauses of the awful strife. And so it is with the peace of this world. Now and then you hear a single voice singing sweetly out of a man's life, in the brief pauses of struggle, care, and discontent. But soon the strife begins again, and the bird-note of peace is hushed. No worldly man has unbroken peace. Only a single silver strain is heard now and then. There is only a brief moment of calm here and there, in a life full of anxiety, unrest, and discord.

But religion brings peace, the peace of the Lord Jesus, a peace that is not broken by any storm, which sings in the bosom, not merely a single voice in the pauses of earth's battle, but a whole choir of voices, unceasing through all the din and strife.

Here is a little cottage by the sea. The night is dark and stormy. The waves break and thunder on the shore. The clouds pour out their rains in angry torrents. The tempest beats and roars about the cottage. But all the evening there is joy within. The lamp burns with bright beam. The cheerful fire glows upon the hearth. A happy circle

gathers about the table. Joyful songs ring out into the gloom. The dark night of storm flings no shadows inside. The angry tempest breaks not the gladness of that sweet home. Picture this of the peace religion brings. The world is full of storms, but there is joy in the Christian's heart through all. Songs ring out in the blackest night of trial. Job had this peace, and it was not broken by all his adversities. Paul had it, and he went singing through all his tribulations, persecutions, and trials. An aged Christian woman whom I know has it. She is poor. Every joint in her body is drawn out of its place. For thirteen years she has suffered the most excruciating pains without one hour's relief. But no little child on its mother's bosom is happier than she. She knows that she is the Lord's child, and that he is fitting her for eternal glory. She knows that all she has to bear the Lord sends in tender love. The cross of Jesus sweetens all the bitterness of her life. Does such blessed peace make men gloomy? Does it make life cheerless and sad?

Religion reveals a loving providence, running all through the Christian's life, weaving

out of all its tangled threads a web of beauty. It shows a Father's hand in each event, taking the poison out of trouble, drawing the serpent-tooth out of every evil thing, bringing good out of all things, sheltering, guiding, and blessing his children. Is the thought of such a loving, overruling providence a saddening or gloomy one?

There are sorrows in the Christian's life. Religion does not save from suffering. But while sorrows, like hot, desert winds, desolate the life of the worldly man, they fertilize, enrich, and bless the portion of the child of God; for with his "south land," God has given him springs of comfort whose waters flow through every valley of tribulation. Are the consolations of religion calculated to make men sad or to make life cheerless and gloomy?

Nay, there is no such joyous life in this world as that of the believer. Springs of heavenly blessing burst out all over it. It has not a single desert spot. It matters not how small it may be. The Christian's little cottage and garden are better than the worldly man's thousand acres. The poor widow's one garret-room is better than the gorgeous palace

of him whose splendors are not blessed by the smile of God.

I cannot even name all the blessings which religion pours into our lives through its nether springs. It changes a desert into a garden. It pours sunshine into our hearts. It enriches our poverty. It makes our hard crust soft and sweet as angels' bread. It surrounds us with beautiful things. It fills our hearts and lives with tokens of divine love. It sings to us in our weary hours. It cheers us when we are disheartened. It takes all the anxiety, fear, and unrest out of our lives. For it makes us children of God. And what matters it that this life is sometimes bitter, that burdens are heavy, that work is hard; that you get no rest from toil; that night and day your poor, tired fingers must ply the needle, or be busy in household duties; that there come no pauses in your weary life? What matters it that your heart's song is hushed every now and then by the cry of grief or choked by tears? What matters it that you are poor, that your clothes are threadbare, that sometimes you have only a piece of crust and a cup of water? The Lord knows what things you need. And

what matters it that your earthly portion is so small and so poor, while you are but a pilgrim here, while heaven is your home, and while you have a glorious possession laid up there in reserve?

There was a godly man who built himself a house. It was a pleasant home. There was joy in it. But he said that the best thing about that home was, that, sitting at his own fireside, he could see his father's house away on a distant hill-top. "No matter the weather," said he, "whether winter or summer, spring or autumn,—no matter the sky, whether cloudless or stormy,—when I sit by my east window, my father's roof and chimney-tops, and the door into my father's house, are always visible to my sight. And when night comes on, no matter the darkness—far away over the fields and valleys gleams the light in my father's windows." Blessed and happy is he who builds his earthly dwelling so high that from its doors he can ever see afar off his heavenly Father's house with its many mansions; and that, in the darkest nights, its lights shine down upon him. He will never be lonely, nor afraid. He will never lose hope. He will

breathe heaven's sweetness and catch the accents of heaven's songs, and his eye will be charmed with glimpses of heaven's beauties.

Say not that religion makes life gloomy. However dreary the Christian's earthly lot may be, hidden springs burst up all over it. There is no sorrow which has not in it a hidden well of comfort. There is no want up through whose dry crust blessed supply will not burst, if we but dig for it. In the West, on the broad prairies, I have seen the tall derrick looming up like a ghastly skeleton in the distance. It tells a story of disappointment and vain search. Here men dug and drilled for water. They spent a fortune on this spot, hoping to strike a living spring. They went down a thousand feet or more, but found nothing. But there is no such vain search in the believer's field for wells of blessing. The worldly man may dig down ten thousand feet in his portion. He may find gold and silver. He may find diamonds. But he will not find water. Ghastly derricks stand all over the broad fields of many an unbelieving one, showing where he has sought for joy, for peace, for satisfaction, for comfort, all in vain. But

the child of God may strike his pick in anywhere, and fresh water will flow out. Every spot of his portion is blessed and full of blessing. Every circumstance is a well-curb fencing in its flowing spring. He has only to drop the bucket of faith anywhere to draw up heavenly gladness, comfort, and good. The deep furrows that sorrow ploughs in his life are only channels through which the blessed waters flow to irrigate his field and enrich his heart. The strokes that he feels so often and that give him so much pain, are but the smitings of the rod of God, to bring out fresh water from the rock. These nether springs burst out all over the believer's field.

The Basis of Friendship.

GOD has made us social beings needing sympathy and affection. A man living on a solitary island in the midst of the sea, cut off from all human companionship, seeing no face, feeling no warm hand-grasp, hearing no word from human tongue, without sympathy, without help, torn out of the great web of human life and love, and cast away, would be miserable indeed. A man might have all the riches of the world, and live in a palace filled with all the comforts and luxuries of civilization, but if he had no friends he would be very poor.

It is the part of wisdom, then, to seek to have friends, and to form close and tender friendships in the days of youth and prosperity. And the word of God tells us that "He that hath friends must show himself friendly."

First, he must be worthy of friends. Even Cicero taught that true, genuine friendship can exist only between the good and virtuous.

Wicked men may combine together in some sort of compact, which they may call friendship, but it is not worthy of that sacred and holy name. It is based only on self-interest; or its bond is sin. No false heart is capable of friendship. A true friend is one who "loveth at all times." Then a *selfish* man cannot have friends. Selfishness is a deadly Upas in a heart, blighting all the beautiful flowers which God has planted there.

There are a great many people who want friends, to help them. They want influence, assistance, gain, favor, advertisement. They want friends as the king wants steps up to his throne, to walk upon up to greatness and power. They want friends as the river wants springs and rills, to pour water into its channels. They want friends as the auctioneer wants a bell-ringer, as the quack-medicine man wants rocks and boards and trees by the wayside. Selfish men want friends to further their own purposes, to enlarge their own prosperity, to add to their own fame, to help them over the hard places. And when a man can no longer be of any use to them, they do not want to be cumbered with his friendship.

Selfishness is, therefore, death to friendship. Only truth and truth will wed. Friendship must be mutual. *Love* may exist on one side, but *friendship* requires two hearts reciprocally attached. It is the knitting together of souls. As when two trees, standing and growing side by side, put out their roots and branches, till the roots and branches of both are woven, tangled, and matted together, branch clasping branch, and root binding root, so in friendship each heart's tendrils of affection lay hold on the other, and weave themselves into a holy web of love, binding both hearts together. Mutual unselfishness, reciprocal self-sacrifice, is the true basis of friendship.

Two people who both must have their own way all the time, cannot be friends. Where one always has his own way, and the other always yields, there is, on the one side tyranny, on the other side slavish subjection; but there is no friendship. Friendship implies mutual unselfishness. Each forgets self and lives for the other. Each thinks of the other's comfort, forgetting his own.

And such a friendship binds two hearts together indissolubly. "They twain shall be

one flesh," is not a mere figure of speech, as a picture of true marriage. It is just what God meant should be actually realized in every marriage. But it means more than living together in the same house, more than a partnership, more than forbearance and toleration, more than authority and subjection. It means an actual union of hearts, a growing together of lives, until one pulse throbs in both, and one spirit animates the purposes and thoughts of both. The one life gives itself to the other; they meet on the altar; the fire of God falls upon them; and they are "no more twain, but now one."

And nothing can ever separate them. They were not true friendships, not genuine marriages, which are now destroyed. They were only external. The bond was not friendship. When two hearts are truly united, they cannot be torn asunder. Mountains and oceans may be between them. But mountain-walls cannot divide hearts, and seas cannot drown love.

Time wears out many a beautiful robe. The threads of many a web decay and turn to ashes through the lapse of years. But the

threads of friendship's web are silver and golden. They are as bright after scores of years as ever.

Then even death has no power to destroy friendship. True marriage, true union of hearts, is absolutely inseparable. They neither marry, nor are given in marriage, in heaven; and yet death is not a divorce court. When hearts are joined together on earth, their love sanctified by the divine love, their union sealed by the blood of Christ, they shall walk on together in white forever. Meeting again on the other side, they shall be like two friends, separated for a time, but brought together again. They will have a great many questions to ask, and a great many things to tell each other. And they will take up the threads of life and love they dropped when the one was taken and the other left, and will go on weaving the beautiful garment forever.

But it is only of true friendship that I affirm these things, and I believe such friendships are too rare. Too many are but for a day. Adversity blights them. Separation sweeps them clean out of the heart. They were not friendships. They were only selfish compacts,

or mere external unions. If any one would have his heart blessed by such a friendship as I have described, he must lay self on the altar. The fire that does not consume one's own heart, is not the fire that comes down from heaven.

Then again, to have friends one must be friendly. When certain savages looked for the first time into a mirror, they wanted to break it in pieces, because of its horrid ugliness; whereas, it was only their own black, disfigured, tattooed faces that they saw. Many people think this world very cold, very cruel, very unfriendly; while really they see only pictures of their own hearts mirrored in society. Every man will hear the echoes of his own voice from society. You will get about as much as you give. Be friendly and you will have friends.

Then friendships need cultivation. They are like rare and beautiful flowers, brought to our wintry clime from the warm south. They require the most tender care. No flowers in this world are so tender as these love-plants, transplanted from heaven into our earthly gardens. Bitter words fall like frosts upon

them. Neglect, wrong, cruelty, unkindness will destroy them.

And no hand can restore a blighted friendship. No hand can ever give back the beauty of the flower when the frost has destroyed it; for no loom of earth can weave again its delicate garments, and no hand can paint again its glorious beauty. And there is no skill of man that can restore the tender grace and beauty, and the sweet and rich fragrance of friendship's heavenly plants, when the frosts of unkindness or bitterness have fallen upon them. We must cherish sacredly, then, the choice friendships of our hearts. We must cultivate them tenderly. We must pour our heart's warmest sunshine upon them. We must shield them from the frosts.

This is true of the friendships and loves of home, though many seem to forget it. The wooing too often ends with the honeymoon, and the two who have sworn "to love and cherish each the other, until death shall separate them," do the *loving* well enough perhaps, but forget the *cherishing*. There is no friendship on the earth that needs cultivation so much as that of marriage. It should not be

taken as a matter of course. It should be nourished with tenderest and most assiduous care. And so with all the home loves. There is no place where one should take so great pains to be kind, gentle, patient, courteous, and loving, as at home. A man should always be on his very best behavior there. He should never carry a thunder-cloud into his own home, scathing and shivering the hearts that are dearest to him. Let him do his thundering somewhere else, and carry clear blue sky home.

Now a great many men who are brilliant, sparkling, courteous away from home, in business circles, or in society, are dull, gloomy, gruff and awful at home. It may be that they have very loving hearts; that they carry their dear ones very deep in their bosoms. But why does their love never find expression? Water plenty in a deep well, with nothing to draw it out, will not refresh a thirsty man. Mary broke the box that its odor might fill all the house where Jesus was. So should we break the sealed box that holds our love, that its sweetness may flow out.

Why is it that so many men are so sparing

of their expressions of love? They have it in their power to add immeasurably to the joy of their loved ones, whose hearts are yearning and hungering for the tender words they used to hear. Why do they not do it?

"We have careful thought for the stranger,
And smiles for the sometime guest;
But oft for our own the bitter tone,
Though we love our own the best."

When you go home in the evening, surprise your wife with the tenderness of the old wooing days. You will lift the burdens from her heart, and open a fountain of glad joy there. Remember, you swore to *cherish* her. Then go and romp with the children. Make them happy and make them love you. Take care of your own garden.

Lay Work.

IT is certainly one of the most hopeful indications of the age in which we live that the church is awaking to the importance of calling all her forces, lay as well as clerical, into the field, to labor for the Master. There was a time, not back beyond the memory of living men, when a strong and stubborn prejudice existed in the minds of many Christian people, and especially, it must be confessed, in the minds of many Christian ministers, against almost every form and variety of lay work. But these prejudices are vanishing from the church. The feeling is rapidly gaining ground that it is the duty of every Christian man and every Christian woman to be actively engaged in some part of the Lord's work. The inquiry now heard on every hand, is, How can we get the people to work? How can we develop the energies and forces that lie useless in the hearts and hands of the laity?

For there is certainly a vast amount of

unutilized power lying idle in the Christian church. There are men in almost every congregation, whose tongues God has touched with the gift of eloquence, who, on the platform or at the bar, hold their auditors enchained, and whose eloquence, if it were employed in the church of God and anointed by the Holy Ghost, would tell mightily against sin and for salvation. There are men with gentle and persuasive manner, who, if they should go, baptized from on high, into the streets and alleys where sinners are perishing, might win many souls for Christ. There are men rich in Christian experience, who know the way of temptation and the joy of victory, who could be like guiding guardian angels to many a struggling, stumbling young Christian who is in danger of perishing by the way for want of such a friend. There are men and women with deep, tender sympathies and large hearts, who could bear richest blessings into homes of bereavement and sorrow.

Yet these noble gifts and powers are locked up in the hearts and arms of God's people, and yield no blessing to the world and no revenue of praise to the Master. There is

gold enough locked up in the hills and mountains, undigged and uncoined, to make every man, woman, and child in the world a millionaire. And I believe there is power enough locked up in the Christian church, idle, unused, if it were developed and utilized, to bring the whole world to the Redeemer's feet in a few brief years.

And no one will deny that these slumbering energies and idle resources should be set agoing for the good of the world and the divine glory. God gives a man no power which he does not wish him to employ. Possession of a gift is therefore the divine ordination for the exercise of that gift. No talent is to be laid up in a napkin. It was Cromwell, I believe, who, finding in a chapel silver statues of the apostles, commanded that they be taken down and coined into money, that they might go about doing good. So God would have all the idle, unused talents of his people coined and sent out to bless the world.

And surely there is need that every slumbering energy of the church should be called out. Ordained ministers alone cannot evan-

gelize the whole world. They are too few in number to carry the gospel into every alley and court, and into every home. Then there are many kinds of work which can be better done by Christian laymen, full of the love and spirit of Christ, than by any ordained minister. There are spheres into which they can enter freely, carrying the power of the gospel, which are sealed against the professional minister.

These facts admitted, the question arises: How can these idle functions be utilized? How can every Christian be induced to employ the gift God has bestowed upon him, for the conversion of the world? This is the question which waits and waits at our doors for solution. There is scarcely a pastor anywhere who has not wept bitterly over his vain, or all but vain, efforts to call out the Christian life and energy of his people.

There are no patent-right methods for developing Christian energies. And yet, certainly an important part of every pastor's work is to get his people to work. The best Christian minister is not he who does the most work himself, but he, who, doing his own part

well, sets hundreds of other hearts and hands to work also.

Doubtless, training-schools are good. There are hundreds of Christians whose hearts burn with the desire to work for Christ, who need practical suggestions and instructions. And yet it seems to me there is something wanting back of all mere technical training. It is easy enough to arouse men to work spasmodically. In revivals everybody works, but when the excitement passes away, everybody lays off the harness. We want Christians who will work from deep principle and not from mere impulse. We want, not mountain torrents, foaming and dashing now and then, but deep rivers, whose springs are born of the mountain rocks, and flow on through summer and winter. If men's hearts are full of the love of Christ, they will work. Nothing will discourage them or chill their ardor. You cannot chain them back. What we want, then, is more heart piety. The best way to make a tree fruitful is to attend well to the roots. The best way to produce fruitful Christians is to care well for the roots of Christian life. What is needed, then, for the developing of

Christian energies, is a more thorough consecration, a better heart-life, a closer walk with God, more of the indwelling of Christ.

Can there, then, be any better training-school for Christian workers than a school for the simple study of God's Word? Cannot much of the superficialness of our Christian life be traced back to the lack of vital truth in the heart? If the fountain be empty, can the streams flow full?

Besides, if men are to preach, or teach, or give comfort, they must have the living Word in them to dispense. God will bless nothing else. Of Paul the Lord said that he was "a vessel" to bear his name to others. And that is all he wants any preacher, lay or clerical, to be; a vessel, a cup to bear the water of life to others. And the cup is nothing in itself. The most beautiful vessel of gold, if empty, will not quench the thirst; but the commonest earthen vessel, if filled with cold water from the spring, will bear relief, comfort, and life to thirsty lips. No one, then, is qualified to be a Christian worker, whether in the pulpit, the Sabbath-school, or in the homes of men, who is not full of the living, life-giving Word.

How can any one give what he does not himself possess? How can an empty vessel quench human thirst?

Let the people's hearts be full of the Word of God. It will serve a double purpose. It will quicken their own souls and fire them with zeal, and it will give them something to bear to others.

My Responsibility.

WHAT we want in our churches to give them power and the highest usefulness is the grasping and realizing of the thought of individual responsibility. A church is nothing but an aggregation of individuals. The life of a church is simply the life of all its individual members working together in one organized body. The zeal of a church is simply the zeal of all its members fused and burning together. The devotion of a church is a hundred, or a few hundred, coals glowing upon one altar. The good works of a church are simply the good works of all its members. In his own place, and to the extent of his own

power, every member, even the humblest, is responsible for the life, activity, prosperity, and usefulness of the church to which he belongs.

Take up a single point of responsibility from the many that attach to individual church membership. The truth should be realized that all revival and spiritual quickening in the church must come through individual hearts. We deplore the coldness of the church, its languishing devotion, its diminishing fervor and zeal, its spiritual deadness and lethargy. We sing revival songs. We pray revival prayers. We preach revival sermons. And we wonder why revival never comes.

But how is it in the individual hearts? Has the revival begun there yet? Everybody is looking after the condition of the church so intently that he has no time to look after his own heart. We need more Nathans to talk parables to our delinquent Davids, and by their pungent home-thrust, "Thou art the man," to drive them to their closets, to their Bibles, to their God, and to the care of their own hearts. The best thing any man can do

toward the cultivation of a state or county is to cultivate well his own farm, or his own field or garden. He would not be a very useful man who should spend his time in finding fault with his neighbor's farming, or with the general state of agriculture, and allow his own field to become overgrown with weeds and thorns. And the same is true in the church. The only revival that will bless the church is that which shall begin in the individual hearts of the church membership. And the very first thing for every Christian to do is to secure the quickening and reviving of his own spiritual life.

Hence every Christian owes it to the Master and to his church, to live in close communion with God, to walk in the Spirit, to be filled with the Holy Ghost.

The great river that flows through the valley, and bears a nation's wealth on its bosom, is born of the ten thousand springs that flow out upon the hillsides and mountains, and burst up in the meadows and fields. So the great power of a strong and noble Christian church is born of the hearts of its individual members. The springs which com-

pose it flow out of the secret closets, and from under the family altars of the people.

There is nothing, therefore, which tells so fatally upon the spirituality of a church, as the decay of home religion and closet devotion. It affects it just as the drying up of the springs affects the river. Every Christian owes it then to Christ to make his home religion holy and heavenly. It is to be feared that the family altar is crumbling down in too many Christian households, that the old Bible is gathering dust on the shelf, and that home piety is losing its vigor and life. A traveler tells of tarrying for a night in a village among the mountains and lakes of Scotland, and witnessing this beautiful scene. At nightfall, suddenly, every villager disappeared from the streets. There was scarcely one to be seen. And when he asked where they had all gone, the answer was, "They have gone to family prayers, sir." What a holy scene—a whole village bowing at the same hour in their evening prayers! Could this be realized in all the homes of every Christian church in the land, what rich blessings would flow out into the churches!

Then still back of the family altar, as a spring of spiritual power, is the secret closet of prayer and communion. Many a precious revival, which has resulted in the most glorious blessing to the church and to the world, has been the open answer to the secret cries of the closet. What a mighty power would a whole church of wrestling Jacobs be! It is back in these hidden springs that revival must begin, and out of these secret fountains that spiritual power in the church must flow. Revival is a personal matter. Every member is responsible for the life of the church. Every member should look well to his own heart. Let each keep his own little garden, and there will be no neglected spots in the great vineyard of God.

Explanation.

PETER could not understand why Jesus should so condescend as to wash his feet. It perplexed and puzzled him, and he shrank from submitting to it. Jesus said, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." And so it proved. There came days afterwards when he understood it all, when he knew why his Master had done it, and when he truly saw beauty, wisdom, love, richest instruction, and divine disclosure in it.

And the same principle applies all through life. There are many things in the providence of God which at the time are dark and obscure, but which the future makes clear and plain. The Lord lays us aside in the midst of our usefulness, he desolates our homes, he breaks our harp-strings, he pours bitterness into our cups of sweetness. Our lives are full of strange, perplexing things, and we do not know what they mean. Our dim eyes cannot

read off the dark pages. Our dull ears cannot hear the voice of love that speaks out to us from every circumstance. Our heavy hearts cannot perceive the love that throbs with full pulse in every event.

But there will come a day when every dark page in our life's history shall be explained, when all the tangle and confusion shall be unraveled, and the web shall lie before us woven through unto the end, warp and woof, with threads of gold and silver. This word of Christ is the key to all the dark and strange providences in the life of every believer: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

One reason for the present obscurity is our ignorance, or present limited knowledge. We know now only in part. We see only through a glass darkly. The boy enters the college, and the teacher puts into his hand a page of Greek, and asks him to read it. But he cannot understand a sentence of it. He cannot spell out a single word. He cannot tell what one letter is. It is a page of hieroglyphics to him. It is full of mysteries. But the years roll on. He applies himself to the study of

the language. He masters the alphabet; he learns to spell out the words, and then to translate. By-and-by commencement-day comes, and the professor hands him again the same page that so puzzled and perplexed him on the day of his matriculation. It is all plain now. He reads it off with perfect ease; he understands every word. There is beauty for him now in every line. Every sentence contains some golden truth. It is a page of the New Testament in the very words first written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit; and words of love, of heavenly wisdom, of divine instruction lie upon the page. As he reads they thrill his whole soul, and fill all his heart with the warmth and tender joy of heaven. Every word is bright with the hidden fires of God's love. Riper knowledge has unlocked to him all the mysteries of the page.

We are all scholars in God's school. The lessons set for us seem at first like the pages of an unknown language. We cannot pronounce the words. We cannot understand their meaning. They confuse and perplex us. We see no wisdom, no beauty, no love in them. But the passing years bring riper

wisdom and fuller knowledge. Every day the past becomes plainer; and when we stand at the end of our school-days the old confusing pages will be clear and simple to us. We shall be able to read them off with ease. Then we shall see that every line held a golden lesson for our hearts; that every providence in our lives was one of God's precious love-thoughts written out for us; and the whole page will glow with divine beauty. Only fuller knowledge is needed to explain to us much of the mystery of our lives; and in the cloudless light and perfect revelation of heaven, every shadow of mystery will vanish, and the strangest providences will seem as plain and easy as childhood's first lessons are to ripened and cultured manhood.

Another reason why many of the Lord's ways seem so strange to us is because we see them only in their incompleteness. We must wait until they are finished before we can fully understand what God is doing. In the artist's studio you may see pictures that are only faint outlines. There are the branches of a tree and no trunk; or there is the trunk and no branches. There is a head, only, fin-

ished, or the outline picture of a man with only one arm or one hand filled out. No one would judge of the artist's work in this unfinished state. He would wait until all his pictures were completed. And as our lives appear to ourselves we see them when God is in the very midst of his work upon them. The work of sanctification is the process of bringing out the features of spiritual and divine beauty in human souls. And in this process the Divine Artist oftentimes employs trials as his instruments. He first seems to destroy. But tribulation worketh patience. Many a man learns submission when the Father's hand rests so heavily upon him that he cannot rise. Many a feature of beauty in the soul is brought out in the darkness of affliction. The process seems to be destructive, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Not at the time, but *afterwards*. When God finishes his work it is beautiful and very good.

There was a time when the heart of Jacob was well-nigh crushed by an accumulation of adversities. Twenty years before, Joseph had been torn out of his arms and slain as he

supposed. Now Simeon was lying in a dark dungeon in Egypt, under the hand of a despotic lord. And Benjamin, too, was to be carried away. In the bitterness of his soul he cried out, "All these things are against me." But these things were not against him, God had not yet finished his work. The final result had not yet been wrought out. All things seemed against him, but he lived to praise the Lord for all the strange providences which appeared so cruel at that hour. These were but the rude blocks out of which God was building up a beautiful home for his old age, and with which he was laying the foundation of future greatness and glory for his family. They were links in a golden chain of blessing.

So it ever is, "Hereafter thou shalt know." Wait till God has completed his work, and then all shall be well. You may see it even on the earth. Before you close your eyes in death you may see the good brought out of the seeming evil of your life. But if not, if you die with the mystery still unsolved, one moment in heaven will explain all. Then you shall see all things completed. You shall

see the web out of the loom, all its beautiful figures perfect, not one thread dropped or tangled. You shall see the temple finished, every block in its place, and the whole adorned with glory. You shall see the picture when the artist has put the last touches to it, and when it appears no more marred and spoiled, as you thought it would be by so much trial, but perfect and beautiful, bearing in every feature the likeness of Christ. Then you shall see all the providences of your life carried out to their final result. You shall see both the discipline and its blessing; both the affliction and its rich fruits; both the furnace-fires and the brilliant gold.

When the night comes on, when the mists and fogs darken the sky and hide the stars, and the vessel cannot be guided, the sailor drops his anchor and waits for the morning. So Christian faith may do in the hour of darkness and perplexity. It cannot see the good or the wisdom of the providences of life, but it knows that the hand of love is shaping them all, and that the end shall be blessing and glory. It knows that the morn-

ing will come, that the mists will clear away, and it may drop the anchor and wait for the day.

Chains of Gold.

"More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of."

THE power of prayer never can be understood on earth. What wonders it has wrought cannot even be imagined. It is one of the forces of the world which is not down in the philosopher's scheme, and whose influence on the events and results of life is not the subject of mathematical calculation.

What souls prayer has saved, what wanderers it has reclaimed, what fainting ones it has cheered and upborne, what tempted ones it has nerved for new struggles, only heaven can reveal. By prayer

"The whole round world is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

And, surely, among all prayers that go up to God, none are dearer or more availing than the prayers of parents for their children.

They are the hallowed breathings of the purest, tenderest love. Such prayers, if persistent, believing, and importunate, God always answers in the end. Monica prays for her son; he goes deeper and deeper into sin, but she will not give him up. For many years while he wanders far from God, she stays at her altar. At last all her intercessions are answered in one hour when her son Augustine falls down at Jesus' feet.

The mother of John Newton struggled mightily for her child. When he was eight years old she died. For twenty years her prayers remained unanswered, while he plunged into the vilest depths of sin. But the faithful God sent the answer at last. And there are thousands who have been saved by a mother's prayers.

A child can never get away from a parent's loving intercession. He may run away from home and roam on the streets and rush into dangers; but these prayers, faith-directed, love-winged, can find him anywhere and build a wall of fire about him, and draw down over him the sheltering wings of God. He may plunge into some den of evil, some gateway

of hell, and start madly on a downward course; but if, in his home, loving parents are at their altars pouring out tears and prayers, the strong hand of God is on his shoulder, and he will be restrained and led back. He may try to keep out of his parents' sight, and to break the restraints that bind him to his home; but he cannot get away from their prayers, nor break the chains of steel with which they have bound him thus to the throne of God. He may roam the world over to get away from God, but some time, somewhere, in some narrow path, the home prayers will meet him face to face, with drawn sword, as the angel met Balaam in the way, and turn him back to seek the way of truth and life.

Oftentimes a criminal hastens away from the commission of his dark deed, and takes passage in a vessel about to sail; and before his crime is discovered is far out upon the sea. With bounding heart he greets the first sight of the foreign shore. Stepping on that shore he will be free forever. He will begin a new life. But when the vessel arrives in port he is seized, bound in irons, and borne back to expiate his guilt. On the quick telegraphic

wire the news of his crime and the order for his arrest had outsped his flight, and justice stood waiting to lay her hand upon him and lead him back. So it is that a parent's prayers often meet and arrest a wandering, sinning child. When he seems farthest away from God, and from the home influence, and when he least expects such a message, suddenly he is halted. An invisible hand is laid upon his arm; he is bound with strong chains, and borne back resistlessly to the bosom of God. It was the home prayer that did it.

No loving parent should then ever cease to pray for his child. And it is not enough to pray once, or only occasionally. We should be "instant in prayer." To pray for a few months or years is not enough. To cease to pray at all is to give up the cause and lose everything. It is the last stroke that fells the tree. It is the last hour of endurance that wins the battle. Years of intercession have been lost because the parent fainted and gave up before the answer came. Every hour of God's delay is gathering a richer blessing; and every prayer put up is a new pledge of the child's salvation, laid up in heaven.

Men make ropes out of many fine threads. One thread alone will not bear much stress; but a thousand threads woven and twisted together, make a mighty cable which will hold the ship against a storm. So home prayers may seem weak threads as they are breathed out from quivering, trembling lips; but thousands of them make a mighty cable which binds the child to the throne of Christ so firmly that no blast of evil can sweep him away. And every prayer makes the cable stronger. The parent may die without seeing his supplications answered, or his child converted; but his prayers die not with him. They remain where faith has fastened them; one end around God's throne, and the other about the heart of his child, fast anchoring it to heaven; and some day, perhaps years after he himself has gone home to God, the angels will haul in the great cable, and give him his child, his heart's treasure, the answer to all his prayers. Let us every one, parents and friends, in the beautiful thought of the poet, seek to bind our loved ones with these chains of gold fast to the feet of God.

Gifts Differing.

ALL men are not alike in their natural endowments. The differences we see in powers and attainments are not all the result of education or of varying circumstances. If all had precisely the same opportunities for development and culture, if all grew up in precisely the same circumstances, there would still be the most wonderful diversity of gifts and powers. The sun shines alike on all the plants and trees, and the rains fall alike on them; and yet they grow up, each with its own distinct individuality. All flowers do not become daisies, nor all trees oaks. The rose cannot through any kind of culture become an apple-tree. The creeping vine cannot be taught to rear its head high up, the peer of the mighty oak. The clover cannot be cultivated into a water-lily. A thousand years of culture would not give to the blazing sunflower the fragrance of the mignonnette. God has made them to differ. He gives to the oak a gift of strength,

to the vine a gift of fruitfulness, to the rose a gift of beauty, and to the heliotrope a gift of fragrance. And so he makes men to differ, distributing his gifts among them; and no advantages of culture or education would obliterate these differences. He gives to some five talents, to some two, to others only one.

There is the most wonderful variety in all of God's works. One star differs from another star in glory. The surface of the earth is diversified by valleys, hills, mountains, plateaus, rivers, lakes, and seas. In the vegetable world you find the giant pine of California, and at its root the tiny moss clinging to the rock. The sea contains great whales, and if you take a microscope and look into a drop of water, you shall find it to contain myriads of minute animalculæ, so small that the single drop in which they move is like an ocean to them. Great beasts roam the forest, and if you examine a green leaf, you shall find it a little world in itself, with its tiny forests and gardens, and covered with its dense population of living creatures. And the same variety characterizes human gifts. No two faces are alike, and of all the millions of the

earth no two have precisely the same capacities and endowments.

I suppose the reason why God has thus distributed his gifts so unequally is that every part of the work of the world may be done. This is the reason St. Paul gives in his letter to the Corinthians: "If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?" And we may carry out the illustration. If all men were merchants, who would till the soil, navigate the ships, and work the mines? If all were painters or sculptors, who would write the books and heal the sick? If all had the gifts of a Napoleon to organize and command, who would be the subalterns and privates? If all were millionaires, who would compose the great army of laborers who drive the wheels of business? If all had the gift of poetry, who would write the plain prose of life? If all in the church had the gift of pulpit eloquence, who would teach in the Sabbath-school, or carry tracts and books from street to street, or minister in men's homes among the sick, the poor, the fallen, the weary?

There is every variety of work to be done, and there is, therefore, need for every variety of workman. And God distributes his gifts so that there may be a hand for every task, a foot for every errand, a tongue for every word that needs to be spoken, and a heart for every service of love. There is no confusion in his distribution. As the many members of the body, working together in perfect harmony, make up one complete body, so the many members of the body of Christ, if all are faithful in their diverse spheres, together make one glorious whole.

Every one, even the humblest, has a distinct mission of his own, and God bestows just the gifts each one needs for the work allotted. He wanted some great apostles to found his church and to bear his name before kings, and he chose twelve men and gave them great gifts. He wanted a reformer to tear the draperies of superstition from the cross and to unchain the Bible, and he raised up Luther and fitted him for the glorious work. So in every age he has a few great missions to fill, and he grants to a few men great gifts. But at the same time he wants

humble servants to go and sit down by the poor, sick woman in her dingy garret and tell her of the Saviour's love; to visit work-houses, prisons, almshouses, and hospitals; to teach the ragged child, and to do the thousand little nameless things of Christian service which must every day be done. And he gives to many of his servants just one talent to fit them for doing just these little things.

The Great Eastern is a magnificent steamer, but she could not run up the Wissahickon. There must be vessels of all sizes to ply in all the channels of the waters. So there is need for every variety of gift in the church. God needs men to stand in the pulpit with hearts and tongues on fire with the eloquence of heaven, to proclaim the gospel to the thousands and to lead the sacramental hosts to battle. And he needs men and women to go out into all the trades and occupations, into printing-offices and counting-rooms, into mills and stores, into narrow courts and dark alleys, to bear the name of Jesus and the fragrance of his love everywhere. Hence to many of his servants he gives only one talent to fit them for doing little quiet things, for

running little errands, for performing little noiseless ministries.

Sometimes God touches a woman's tongue and she writes songs that thrill a nation; or she has the gift of eloquence, and her words move the masses and fire the people's hearts; but if all women wrote poetry, or were platform orators, who would mould and train infancy and childhood? who would fill homes with love and sweetness? who would perform the countless little humble ministries in the sick-room, among the poor, in the abodes of sorrow, which only woman's soft and gentle fingers can do? There must be a great many people with common gifts for plain, common work.

But whatever our talents may be, they are just what God has given us; and they are just what we need for the special work which God has allotted us. And if we use our gifts and fill our places, however lowly and humble they may be, we shall be noble. Who will say that the modest daisy is not as noble in its own place as the tallest, proudest oak? Nobleness consists in being what God made and meant us to be, and in doing what God

gives us to do. Faithfulness to our mission will receive the reward; and unfaithfulness in the use of our gifts, whether great or small, will bring condemnation and loss of all.

A Letter and the Answer.

IT may be that in the following extract from a letter, received from a weary and discouraged teacher in one of our common schools, the writer has given expression to feelings which exist, unspoken, in the hearts of hundreds of other teachers:

"I am growing very weary of my work. I toil away, year after year, in obscurity, unnoticed, unhonored. No one ever speaks to me encouragingly or sympathizingly. Night and day I carry the children in my heart; I live only for them; I give all the energies of my soul to my work on their behalf. And yet their parents rarely ever, by word or token, recognize my interest in them, or my work for them. The children themselves are ungrateful. They grow up and pass into their

places in life without cherishing one kind remembrance of their teacher. Oh, how I long for sympathy, for some expression of gratitude and love! There are hours when I would give all I have in the world for one word of cheer."

It is perhaps true that there is no class of earnest, faithful workers, toiling anywhere, with less sympathy and encouragement, and less earthly reward, than the teachers in our common schools. Their wages are but a mean and beggarly pittance. Then they are robbed of that reward, which is better than money: the love and gratitude of those for whom they toil. I do not think the words of my weary and discouraged friend are too strong.

Now these things ought not so to be. There is no nobler work performed on this earth than is wrought by the great army of common-school teachers in our land. They deserve a far more liberal remuneration than they receive. The parents should esteem them very highly for their work's sake, and give them that sympathy and encouragement which their hearts crave. And children,

growing up to manhood and womanhood, should carry deep in their hearts the names of their early teachers.

It is our duty to remember, with gratitude, every one who has ever borne a blessing to us; left a beautiful touch upon the canvas of our life; given us any fresh impulse; comforted, cheered, or encouraged us at any time; or helped to fit us for usefulness in the world. And next to our own parents, there are none who do so much to mould and shape our lives for the spheres we occupy as our early teachers. We are apt to regard them as persons whose mission in life is to deprive us of our liberty, and make the hours tedious and irksome to us; but I would love now to meet the teachers of my childhood. I would thank them from my deepest heart for what they did for me.

But I desire in this paper to point all, who, like my weary friend, have become discouraged, to the brighter side of this work. There are encouragements which should keep them always glad, which should spring up in their hearts as fountains of strength, inspiration, and blessing, ever fresh and new. What

pleasure is sweeter than the consciousness of having helped and blessed others! And every teacher has this consciousness in his own breast. No one will ever, in the future, near or remote, regret having been a faithful teacher of the young. Whoever gives a child a good and holy impulse, or helps to shape a character, or beautify a life, or fit any one for usefulness, does a noble and glorious work. He may toil very obscurely. The world may have no word of praise for him as he works year after year. No one, blest by him, may return again to call him blessed. No hand of gratitude may bring a wreath for his brow.

But God knows every good deed we do. And he sees every touch the teacher gives to a young life; every new and fresh impulse toward growth and development he inspires; every influence he exerts toward nobleness, beauty, and usefulness. He registers every deed, every result. Or if the effort fails of result, he registers the intention, and will not forget the reward.

The man who drops a seed into the ground may never see the plant that springs up, nor the flower that blooms. And those who

admire its beauty, or enjoy its fragrance, may never think of the hand that dropped the seed. But no matter, others are blessed. The flower gives comfort in some sick-room, or cheers one who is weary and sad. And God knows who prepared the blessing, and he will remember to bestow the reward where it belongs.

A man may plant a tree and shape its growth so that it shall spring up into lovely form. He may die before it reaches its full beauty; but no matter, others will admire its goodly proportions and be pleased, or those who are weary may sit in its shade and be refreshed, or eat of its fruit and be filled. They may not think of him who planted it, or trained it for gracefulness and fruitfulness; but no matter, God remembers.

Not only the simple and immediate thing we do, does God count and reward, but the results, the fruits, the blessings that spring out of the act, as well.

Let the teacher think of this when he grows weary in teaching. Let him think of the far-reaching influence of his labors. Elements of character will blossom out years

and years hence, because of the lessons, impulses, inspirations, and helps given in the school-room.

Some of those now under the teacher's care may become teachers themselves, or they may preach the gospel, or in some other sphere may become great blessings in the world, standing like beautiful trees shaking off their golden fruits years hence, to feed hungry minds and hearts. Or they may become fathers and mothers, and may fill homes with holy blessings.

If the teacher lives to witness these remoter results, it will give him great joy to see such beauty and fruitfulness springing from seeds which his hand has planted.

What matters it that the world knows nothing now of the teacher's patient, self-forgetful work? Or that the world shall not know, when it gathers up these fruits in the future, what hand sowed the seeds? Who thinks of the gardener when he walks through the beautiful garden, and admires the plants and flowers? Who thinks of the rain-drop when he looks upon the tall tree, or the fruit-covered branch? Who thinks of the sun-

beam as he beholds the variegated beauty of the landscape? Let the teacher who is weary take new heart and toil on in patience. His work is obscure. He eats not here the fruits of his toil and pain. No crown is on his head. The world forgets him. Those he blesses are ungrateful. No voice sings his praise. No monuments are reared to his honor. His works do not blazon his fame. When he dies his name may not appear in public print. No loving friend may write his biography. No hand of gratitude may plant even a simple flower on his grave. But what matters it? God knows what he has done. He knows whose hand shapes men's lives. He knows where the honor belongs. In heaven the tree will shake all its fruits into the lap of him who planted it.

Perhaps the best part of the world's history is never written with pen and ink, nor struck off from the printer's types. Perhaps the noblest work done on earth is done out of the world's sight. Perhaps the Lord's best and most useful servants here are those who toil patiently in silence and obscurity, without fame, reward, or recognition among men.

Like the roots in forest and field, which no man ever praises when he admires the tree, the flower, or the fruit, they work on in the darkness, preparing rich blessings for the world, while they themselves are forgotten, and even trodden underfoot by the world.

The world thinks only of the greenness, fruitfulness, fragrance, and beauty. But God will remember the roots.

How God Prepares His Jewels.

ONE of the many lessons I get from the life of Peter is the value of defeats, humiliations, and trials. None of the disciples had so rough a time, or so many hard knocks, as he had. He was always in trouble. He was always being defeated. None of the disciples received so many stern, humiliating rebukes from the Master's lips as he. Every little while we find him covered with shame. Then on the night of the betrayal he was terribly sifted by Satan.

There is a meaning in all this. Diamonds

are dug out of the earth in a rough state, with no apparent beauty, covered with a hard, ugly, crust; and they are cut, sawn, split, and put upon the wheel, and ground, and ground, and ground, until they have the right form, until all the blemishes are ground out, and they shine in beauty fit for a king's crown. Peter was a diamond, a great Koh-i-noor; but when the Lord found him, he was a very rough diamond, and had to be kept long upon the wheel, till every speck was ground off. It was through trials, humiliations, and defeats that he became such a glorious man. The only way to break down a man's pride is by defeats and mortifications. The only cure for self-confidence is the cure Christ applied to him. He let him fall into the mire, and sink into the sea, and let Satan "tumble him up and down."

There are some characters that are like summer fruits which ripen early in the season, under the warmth of the sun; but there are few such, except those whom God plucks and gathers, like early summer fruits, in the days of infancy, childhood, and youth.

There are other fruits that ripen not till the

sharp autumn frosts come. All through the summer they are sour, bitter, and unfit for food. The keen frosts make them luscious and mellow. And there are many of Christ's disciples who bear just such fruits. They are very unripe Christians. They are sharp, acrid men. They are severe, selfish, harsh, bitter, censorious. There is no sweetness, gentleness, kindness in them. They may be good men or women; they *are* good at heart, but they are not beautiful. People cannot love them. And yet they are God's dear children.

Then the frosts come—sharp, biting frosts. Afflictions enter their homes; sorrows break in upon them. Bereavements turn the green leaves to sere and yellow. Humiliations come. They are defeated and crushed. God allows them to suffer great temptations. And out of these sad and painful experiences, these troubles and trials, these humiliations and failures, they come, like the autumn fruits after the frosts, mellow, luscious, rich, and ripe. Frost opens the chestnut-bur, and the rich nut rolls out of its prickly envelope. So sorrows and trials strip off from many a beautiful soul its burry garments.

Without these painful processes many a man would never reach glory. It was the rough knocks and sorry tumbles of his early discipleship that made the Peter of the Gospels the Peter of the Acts and Epistles. It was scourging, imprisonment, and persecution that made Paul the brightest jewel of the world. David learned his psalms in the wilderness, when hunted and chased. Bereavement, loss, and sore sickness fitted Job to write that wondrous poem which bears his name. John Bunyan got the "Pilgrim's Progress" out of prison walls, and from the clanking of chains. It was a good thing that Satan sifted Peter; he blew out the chaff, and left only the pure wheat.

Let God burn out your dross, blow out your chaff, mellow your fruits by sharp frosts, and grind off the roughness of your character on the wheel of affliction. Some day, when you get through, and shine in the glory of heaven, loudest amid your praisings will be thanksgivings for your trials.

A diamond lay sleeping quietly in its dark bed in the earth. A pick, plunging into its pillow, disturbed its slumber. "What does

this mean?" cried the little stone in terror, as it was rudely torn out. But the workman heeded not its cry. It was carried away into a strange room, and there it was cut and sawn, and then put upon the wheel and ground. "Why is all this? Why are they destroying me? Why are they cutting and grinding me all away?" Thus groaned the stone, but the men heeded not its complainings.

It is a grand day in the palace. It is a coronation day. The king is to be crowned. Amid the shouts and acclamations of the multitude, the new crown is brought forth and put upon his head. It is all aglitter with diamonds. But there is one stone that is brighter than all the rest. Its beam flashes out like a ray of glory.

"Now I understand it," says the little stone. "Now I know why I was dug out, and cut, and ground, and polished. They were not destroying me. They were only preparing me to adorn this crown." And God knows how to grind his jewels. He knows how to prepare them for his own crown.

God's Workmanship.

THE "new creation," no less than the old, declares upon its very face that the hand that made it is divine. The "living epistle" of true Christian life reveals the handwriting of God. The mighty works of conversion, regeneration, and sanctification only God can perform. When the fountain that used to send out bitter streams, begins to send out pure, sweet waters, the prophet's hand may have cast in the healing branch; but I know it was God himself that sweetened the spring. And when a life once selfish, impure, unloving, unholy, false, hating God, becomes loving, pure, holy, true, Christlike, human lips may have dropped the healing word into the heart; human faith may have called down heavenly blessings upon the life; and human love may have warmed the dead spirit; but I know that God is the true author of the change. If I stand by the grave of Lazarus, and see the dead man come forth living, vigorous, strong,

at the bidding of Jesus, I know that he was divine who did it. And when I see one who has been a reeling drunkard, or a fallen woman, or a prowling thief, or a greedy miser, changed into soberness, purity, honesty, unselfishness, into the beauty of Christ, I know that the hand of God has wrought the marvelous change. When I see Saul on the highway, hurrying eagerly on, his heart full of bitter hate against Christ, his hands red with the blood of martyrs; and, the next moment, all the bitterness, the anger, the hate gone, lying at Jesus' feet, looking up into his face, changed into a meek disciple, I know that it is the hand of God that has wrought this sudden, marvelous change.

If one shows me good fruits, and I taste them, and find them rich, luscious, and sweet, I know they must have grown on good trees. And when I see a life bringing forth the beautiful fruits of righteousness, meekness, love, faith, patience, joy, prayer, and good works, I know that they have been gathered from no tree of earth, but must have grown upon a branch of that great vine, whose root is in heaven, but which trails all over the earth.

If the wind bears sweet odors in its breath, perfumes of flowers or fruits, I know it must blow over fragrant fields or gardens. And if a human life breathes the sweetness of heaven; if the holy fragrance of love perfumes its words, its thoughts, its deeds, and all its influences, I know it must be the breath of the Spirit of God, blowing through that life from the fields and gardens of heaven, that so sweetens and perfumes it.

When I hear lovely strains of sweetest melody and harmony, coming from a musical instrument, as I pass along the street, I know they must be skillful fingers which strike the keys. And when I hear the harmonies of heaven, the sweet music of love and peace, songs of joy and gladness, and especially "songs in the night" of sorrow and trial, coming forth from a human heart; when I hear, however faintly and feebly, in a human life, the echo and repetition of the songs the angels sing as they do God's will; or what seems even a faint reverberation of God's own sweetness, gentleness, love, truth, and peace; I know that it must be the fingers of God that play upon the chords. No other hand could

bring out such harmonies and such melodies of sweetness. Such a song as that Job sang over the mangled corpses of all his children; such songs as Paul and Silas sang that night in the prison at Philippi, while their chains cut deep into their flesh; such songs as the martyrs sang as they went into the flames; such songs as many who read these words have sung in the hour of great trial and affliction, when their hearts were crushed and broken; such songs as all of us have heard from the lips of dying friends as they went down into the valley of shadows,—who but God could bring such heavenly melodies out of human hearts?

Thus on its very face the Christian life bears the evidence of God's creative skill. Only the divine hand could produce such workmanship. Miracles have not ceased. Every conversion, every beautiful and noble Christian life, every life of faith and joy lived in a world of struggle and trial, is as great a miracle as any that Christ wrought in the days of his flesh.

He Knoweth His Own.

IN a certain sense he knows all men, but there is another sense in which he does not know any but his own. Our Lord represents himself as saying to the wicked on the Judgment-day, "I never knew you;" and to the five foolish virgins who came too late, the answer from within is, "I know you not." There is, then, a peculiar sense in which he knows his own and does not know the world.

He knows them by their *faith.* A poor woman came timidly behind him in the great throng, tremblingly reached out her thin, wasted hand, and touched but the fringe on the border of his garment. Turning quickly about, he asked, "Who touched me?" It seemed a strange question to ask, when the unmannerly crowd were treading with rude feet upon his skirts, and elbowing him on every side; and one of his disciples said to him, "Why, Master, the multitudes are jostling against thee, and why dost thou ask, 'who

touched me?'" Ah! but there was one touch different from all the jostlings of the crowd. It was the touch of faith. There was a heart's cry in it. And though it was only the finger-tip of a poor, despised woman, Jesus knew it amid all the rude elbowings of the crowd.

He is on his throne of glory now. All about his feet are throngs of holy angels. Yet his heart is sensitive to the feeblest touch of faith among all the millions of the earth. There are believing ones hidden away from the eye of the world. No church-roll carries their names. No pastor visits them. No minister breaks the bread or pours out the wine for them. Yet the Lord knows them. He hears their cries. They are dear to him. His angels encamp around them. Not one of them is forgotten by him.

The Lord knows his own by *the image they wear.* Every one of them bears the features of the Redeemer on his heart. These features may be very faint and shadowy. They may be covered up and almost hidden beneath the coatings of earthliness and sin which overlay them. But yet they are there. The diamond when found is covered with a thick crust of

worthless matter, but the skilled miner knows that under its rough exterior a brilliant gem lies imprisoned. So God knows where his jewels are.

When the father saw his son coming, he knew him afar off. He had gone away wearing beautiful garments, with the flush of youth upon his cheek, with purity in his eye, with sweetness in his face. He came back in miserable beggar's rags, his features haggard from hunger, his beauty stained and blackened by the polluted waters of sin. But the father knew him. There was something under his rags and filth; beneath his stained features; shining out from the wrecks and ruins of his manhood, which revealed to him his long-lost child. So the eye of God sees, under all the rags, beggary, and imperfection of our lives, shining out, perhaps, in dimmest beauty, yet unmistakably, the image of his Son. He knows every one who bears the faintest trace of divine beauty. He knows his own though they wear only meanest rags.

He knows his own *by their lives.* Grace does not lie like a piece of hidden gold in the bosom. It is like leaven, which leavens the

whole lump. It is a seed, small at first and growing secretly; but it shoots up into a tree and puts forth branches and bears fruits. Piety permeates the whole of a man's being. Life witnesses to the genuineness of conversion. Jacob deceived his blind father by putting on hairy robes, but God cannot be deceived. He knows the white garments which his children wear. He knows the branch by the fruit that hangs upon it. He knows his friends by their obedience. He knows his disciples by their following wherever he leads. He knows the penitent heart by the holy fragrance which it breathes forth. It is a broken heart, a sacrifice which is well-pleasing to him. It is an altar of incense. It is a box of precious ointment broken open. And as we find out the hiding-places of flowers or of perfumes by their fragrance, so God knows the home of the penitent heart by the sweetness which floats up from it.

And he knows the life of faith by the beautiful graces which adorn it, and by the gentle and holy ministries of love which are wrought by its hands. There are multitudes of lowly lives lived on the earth which have no name

among men, whose work no one ever records, but which are well known and unspeakably dear to God. They make no noise in the world, but it needs not noise to make a life beautiful and noble. Many of God's most potent ministries are noiseless. How silently the sunbeams fall all day long upon the fields and gardens, and yet what joy, cheer, and life they diffuse! How silently the flowers bloom, and yet what sweet fragrance they emit! How silently the stars move on in their grand marches around God's throne, and yet they are worlds or suns! How silently God's angels work, stepping with noiseless tread through our homes, and performing ever their blessed ministries about us! Who hears the flutter of their wings, or the faintest whispers of their tongues? And yet we know that they hover over us and move about us continually. So Christ has many lowly earthly servants who work so quietly that they are never known among men as workers, whom he writes down among his noblest ministers. They do no great things, but they are blessings, perhaps unconsciously, wherever they go.

It is said that when Thorwaldsen returned to his native land with those wonderful works of art which have made his name immortal, chiseled with patient toil and glowing inspiration, in Italy, the servants who unpacked them scattered upon the ground the straw which was wrapped around them. The next summer, flowers from the gardens in Rome were blooming in the streets of Copenhagen, from the seeds thus borne and planted by accident. So Christ's lowly workers unconsciously bless the world. They come out every morning from the presence of God and go to their work. All day long as they toil they drop gentle words from their lips, and scatter little seeds of kindness about them; and to-morrow flowers from the garden of God spring up in the dusty streets of earth, and along the hard paths of toil on which their feet tread. They have no distinction among men, but the Lord knows them to be his by the beauty and usefulness of their lives.

He knows his own by their *voice*. A little girl sat long on her mother's knee in silence, and then said, in a low, musing tone, "When I say my prayers, God says, Hark, angels,

while I hear a little noise!" Her mother asked what noise. "A little girl's noise," she replied. "Then the angels will close their lips and hush their songs, and keep very still till I say Amen." What a sweet truth lies in the child's beautiful fancy! Up amid all the ocean of angel song comes to God's ear every child's prayer, every soft sigh, every prisoner's groan. There is never too much singing, nor too many harps resounding in heaven for God to hear "a little girl's noise."

He knows every voice of his own. He recognizes the first faint expressions of the new life. Every murmur of prayer, every unvoiced wish, every faith-winged sigh, every breathing of love he knows, and bends his ear to catch, saying, "Hark, that is the voice of one of my children."

He will know his own when they enter the other world. It was a grand review day. The general in command had risen from the ranks. It was a humble home in which he and his widowed mother lived. To-day high honors were his. He stood amid his officers. Down across the plain a soldier comes leading a humble woman. Her garb was poor. Her

features told of care, her hands of toil. She wore no costly ornaments, no bright jewels. But the moment the general saw her he leaped from his horse and ran to meet her. He took her in his arms. He introduced her to his officers. He led her everywhere with joyful pride. It was his mother. In all his greatness and splendor he was not ashamed to confess her in the presence of all his officers. So the glorious Christ will greet the lowliest of his disciples when they reach the end. He will not be ashamed of them though they come up to heaven out of the darkest court or alley in the great city, out of the deepest poverty and beggary, or from the wards of an hospital or almshouse. He will come down from his throne to welcome them. He will own them before all the heavenly ranks as his friends, for he said, "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God." He is not ashamed to call us brethren now, and he will not be ashamed to own us on the streets of gold. No disciple of Christ will roam for a moment unrecognized on the heavenly shores. He knoweth his own.

A Field without Springs.

CALEB had given to Achsah, his daughter, a field or piece of land, as her marriage portion. When she looked at it she discovered that it lacked one very important thing. It was, doubtless, a rich land, and a goodly marriage portion. It may have been beautiful, valuable, and in many ways desirable; it may have had rich treasures of gold hidden away in the bosom of its hills and mountains; but with all these excellences and advantages, it lacked one thing, and that one thing was vital. It had no springs of water; and good and desirable as it was, it needed these to convert it into a real blessing.

And I see here a picture of every earthly lot which is not watered by the springs of divine grace. The very best portion of this earth is a field without springs of water. It may be very beautiful, very rich, very honorable. It may be a possession in which gold and silver are hidden. It may be a palace to

live in, and a crown to wear. It may possess every comfort and every luxury that earth can afford. But he who has nothing but this world for a portion has a very poor portion at the best. It is "a south land." It lies exposed to the heat of fiery trials. It slopes off toward the burning desert of sorrows. The hot blasts of adversity blow over it, withering its beauties and blighting its joys.

Did you ever see a human heart that was satisfied with this world alone? Did you ever see a mere earthly portion that lacked nothing; that possessed in itself every spring of comfort, blessing, and joy that a heart needs; that made its possessor completely happy; and that met all the hungerings of his nature, and fully answered all the wants and cravings of his soul?

It is very sweet to be reared up and to dwell in a happy home, in the midst of tender human loves. Earth has no such palaces as those affection builds. But if no springs of divine love pour their sweetness into the life, its joys do not fill the heart, and will not last always. A mother spoke to me in glowing words of her daughter's enviable mar-

riage; of her husband's great wealth and distinction among men; of her costly presents; of her elegant wardrobe; of her beautiful new home, with all its rich furniture; of the fine society into which she had entered. But I remembered that there were no springs of water in her goodly portion. Neither she nor her husband had learned the way to the fountains of heavenly joy. No family altar sanctified their home. No voice of prayer went up out of those richly-furnished chambers to God. No ladder with its ascending and descending angels stood on their threshold. No streams from heaven's holy mountains flowed amid their earthly joys. They were without God in the world.

A young man spoke of his brilliant prospects, of his great success, of his wonderful achievements, of his many friends, and drew a golden picture of the future that was opening its doors to him. But I remembered that his portion was like Achsah's, "a south land" with no springs of water. He has not joined himself to Christ. His field is not irrigated and blessed by any never-failing streams from the mountains of God. He has cut himself

off from the springs of divine comfort and blessing. His field is only a desert.

A worldly portion may bring a sort of satisfaction to a life for a time, while the bright days of prosperity continue, and while it is not smitten by the hot winds of adversity. But how is it when trouble comes? Will the richest earthly portion console the man who stands over the coffin of his dead? When the heart is overwhelmed with anguish because of guilt and remorse, will houses, lands, honors, and earthly pleasures give peace? What bitter, idle mockeries these things are in such an hour! A traveler in the desert, famished with hunger, saw a bag half-buried in the sand, which seemed to contain dates. "Thank God! here is bread!" he cried, in wild joy. Tearing it open he found no food. It was a bag of pearls which some one had lost, a whole fortune, but only a mockery to a starving, dying man who wanted bread. And when a soul is crying out in the agony of guilt, in the bitterness of a great sorrow, or in the anguish of eternal dying, what terrible mockeries are the very choicest of this world's rich and beautiful things! They will

not give comfort. They will not bring peace. They will not bridge over the gloomy chasm of death. They will not illumine the darkness of the grave. They will not cover over the hideous stains of sin. They will not put out the fires of remorse. They will not reach over into the eternal world.

Every one has noticed that the most worldly men try to find the comforts of religion in the time of sore trial. Even the profane man and the scoffer want Christ when they come to die. An infidel on shipboard scoffed in the calm and sunshine, caricatured religion, and ridiculed its blessed hopes and promises. But the sea arose, the waves swept over the deck, and death seemed imminent; and then he fell down on his knees and began to cry out, "O God! what shall I do?" His infidelity was good only in the calm, and went crashing down in the storm. The unbeliever's joy will not live through perils and tempests. The infidel's creed is not good to trust in when danger is nigh. It is a poor thing to die by.

If this world is a man's only portion it is a miserable one. It has no springs of comfort for his sorrow hours. It has no rod and staff

for him when he enters the lonely valley. It lifts up no cross to pour its light and love upon his bed of death. It sends him to a judgment where no divine Intercessor pleads; and into an eternity darkened by the guilt of a wasted, sinful life, and cheered by no hope of coming deliverance.

Look about, dear reader, over your field and see if it has springs of water. Do streams of heavenly blessing flow through it? Does your soul draw its life from the mountains of heaven, or are you depending only upon earth's poor, broken and empty cisterns? Are you content with a mere earthly portion? Does it meet the deep cravings of your heart? Has it anything for your hours of trial? Will it do in death? Is it enough for the eternal future? If we discover that our portion is only a field, exposed to hot winds and burning sun, and with no heavenly springs, should not Achsah's prayer be ours, "Oh, my Father, thou hast given me a south land; give me also springs of water."

To Discouraged Workers.

IT is surely a blessed joy which fills the heart of the Christian worker when he is permitted to reap the seeds of his own sowing, and to see the results of his own labor. And often this joy is given on earth. And yet it is impossible to know all the results of Christian effort, or to follow out all the blessed influences which radiate from an earnest, active church or Sabbath-school, or from an earnest, active life. In some kinds of work we can see everything that is done. All the results stand out visible to the eye. When the sculptor works upon his block of marble, every stroke leaves its visible impression. When the artist works upon his canvas, every touch leaves its trace. When the builder toils upon the walls, every brick or stone raises them a little higher. When the author writes his book, every movement of his pen leaves its trace upon the paper. When men work on matter they can see, and the world can see, what is accomplished!

But it is not so in spiritual things. The results are not always apparent. Sometimes, it is true, they are so marked that all the world can see them, as when a wicked man is reformed by the power of the gospel; or, as when one outside the fold of Christ comes in at the door, and sits down with God's people. And yet, in any case, what can be seen or known, now and here, is but a small part of what is done. The number of conversions or accessions to the church is not the measure of the results of teaching and preaching. God's Word gives out thousands of strengthening, comforting, sanctifying, upbearing influences; and these are silent and unseen, yet mighty and powerful. Then there are many seeds sown, especially in the children's hearts, which seem to be lost, but which, many years after, when the sower sleeps in death, will spring up into living fruitfulness and beauty. Perhaps in heaven we shall see that the best influences of our lives have been their unconscious influences, and the most fruitful efforts those we considered labor in vain. Teach God's truth patiently, hopefully, confidently, for he has said, "It shall not return unto me void."

The Best Family Bible.

IN many houses you will see beautiful Bibles, bound handsomely in Turkey morocco, with gilt edges, and full of bright pictures. And I love to see a beautiful Bible in a home, especially if it is not kept too clean and unsoiled. But the most beautiful form in which a household Bible can be bound is in the holy life of godly parents. There is no tinted, gold-edged paper so fair as the pages God gives us on which to write our daily record. The precepts and lessons of the inspired Word sound very sweetly when read out of a richly-covered volume, but they sound far more sweetly when the child can spell them out of the parent's daily life. It is well for a parent to read to his child from the inspired page about the beauty of holiness; but it is better still when the child can see that beauty shining out transfigured in every feature of his parent's character. It is well for him to read of the patience, gentleness, meekness, forbearance,

and love of Christ; it is better when he exemplifies all of these traits. It is well for him to teach the child what the Bible says about lying, profanity, intemperance, Sabbath-desecration, and all sins; it is better when his life proclaims all these lessons.

No family Bible is so well printed and bound as the one that is printed on the heart, and bound up in the life of a godly parent. I would recommend all parents to get this kind of Bible, and to keep the dust off it always by constant use. This is the best kind for a lamp to the children's feet.

A beautiful Christian life is a living epistle written by the hand of God, which the youngest child can read before it has learned to spell out the shortest words of the language. It is a sermon that preaches Christ all day long, seven days in the week. And there is no heresy so dangerous to childhood as heresies lived in the home.

The Infant-Teacher's Grave.

IT has no costly monument. There are only a few plain, simple flowers growing upon it. But there is a monument to her memory, not sculptured in marble, which shall never crumble. There are flowers of sweetness and beauty growing in many a heart which shall never fade, and which God shall some day gather in his hand and twine into a wreath for her glorified brow.

She was in the fullness and freshness of youth when she went out from us at the close of a sweet Sabbath, never to return to us again. When we look at the dead form of one cut down so early in life and in the midst of such usefulness, we think that death came too soon. Oftentimes in cemeteries we see, over the graves of the young, the sculptured symbols of incompleteness. But there are no such symbols in heaven, for every one is immortal till his work is done. The Master takes none of his servants home until every

task is fulfilled. Even the babe of an hour that merely opens its eyes to gladden the mother's heart, and then closes them again and goes back to God, finishes the work God gave it to do. This teacher's work was done.

Thirty moons have waxed and waned since her gentle, tired hands were folded to rest, but her memory is fresh as ever; and her work is going on. The noblest work God gives to mortals was hers—fashioning the hearts and lives of little children. The artist's canvas will crumble, but it was hers to touch hues of fadeless beauty in immortal spirits.

She was one of earth's lowly ones, but in heaven bright honors will be hers, when God gathers up all the lessons she taught, all the good words she spoke, all the blessings she left in infant hearts, all the beautiful things she did, and all the children's tears, and all their love, and weaves all together into an immortal crown of glory for her head. She is resting from her labors and her works are following her.

The Alabaster Box.

MARY had received richest blessings at the hand of her Lord. Her heart overflowed with love for him, and nothing in all the world was too dear or too costly to bestow upon him. So she brought an alabaster box of very precious ointment, broke the box, and poured the ointment on his head. She brought him the very best gift she had.

And so we ought all to bring our best things to Christ. He gave the best he had for us. He gave his life. His heart was broken, and his precious blood was poured out upon our sin-stained earth. And now from his throne of glory he lavishes the best gifts of his love upon us. He does not give us the crumbs from his table, and the worn-out garments from his wardrobe. He seeks all heaven through for its richest, best, and most beautiful things to bestow upon us. There is nothing in all his kingdom too good or too costly to give to us.

And we owe to him the best of everything we have. We should give him the best of our affections. He ought to have the warmest place in our hearts. Bring all the gems and jewels of your love and put them in the crown of Jesus. Bring all the sweetness of your love and pour it upon the head and the feet of Jesus. Gather all the choicest affections of your heart into one precious alabaster box of perfume, and bring it, and break it, and pour it out before him. Bring him the best offerings of your heart's love.

We ought to bring to Christ the best of our lives. Too many give him only the wasted remains. They spend the vigor of their youth, the strength of their manhood, the best of their life's energies, in the world, in business, in selfishness, in sin; and then, when they are old; when their heart's blood is wasted; when their life is burned down to the socket; when their limbs are stiffened with age; when their eye is dim, their voice broken, and their energies are all exhausted; when there is only a weary, wasted body, a worn-out brain, a cold, frozen heart, and a lost soul; then they seek to bring this poor, worthless offering to Christ.

They wait till all the beauty has faded, till all the honey is sipped from the flowers, till all the music is gone out of the harp, and its strings are jangled and broken. They give the best to the world and bring only the faded leaves and dead ashes to Christ.

It is not such an offering that Jesus deserves. We ought to consecrate our childhood to him; to spend our youth in his service; to lay our manhood and womanhood on his altar. Give him the arm when it is strongest, the foot when it is swiftest, the brain when it is clearest, the heart when it is warmest, the tongue when it is most eloquent. Give the best to Jesus.

We ought to give to him our best services. There are too many professing Christians who have time for everything but the work of the Lord. They have time for business, for conversation, for pleasure, for all kinds of societies, but no time for doing the work of the Lord. But, remembering the years Christ spent for us, how full they were of toils, of tears, of self-denials, of sacrifices, do we not owe him the best services of our lives? Should it not be in his cause that we do our best work, put forth our best energies, expend our best

powers, and attain our sublimest achievements? Long ages ago an apostle wrote, "To me to live is Christ." And it was so with all the true followers of Jesus in early Christian days. Before all things else they lived for Christ. Whatever a man's occupation was, he was first of all *a Christ's man.* It was love for Christ that filled and thrilled his whole life, that set his whole being on fire, and that ruled all the passions of his soul.

But how is it now with the great mass of the followers of Christ? Are they not first merchants, or soldiers, or statesmen, or politicians, or mechanics, and then far down in the scale of their lives, Christians? I put the question to you, dear reader, What are you first? What is *the one thing* of your life which enkindles your warmest thoughts, which inspires your loftiest enthusiasm, which impels your best endeavors, which weaves itself into all your plans and schemes, which possesses your mind in the pauses of business and toil, which mingles its threads in all the fancies of your dreams, which gives shape to all your efforts, which underlies everything you do, and which absorbs your best energies and your

noblest services? Is it the glory of God, or is it your business, your worldly ambition? Bring Christ no more the mere waste and fragmentary services of your lives. Make not your Christian life any longer a secondary thing. Bring not to the altar of your Redeemer any more a cold, dead, heartless service. Put Christ first. Do your best work, sing your sweetest song, speak your tenderest word, perform your holiest ministry for him.

We should bring our best gifts to Jesus. In the olden days no offering would be accepted at the altar which had any spot or blemish. The people were taught that they must bring their very best things to God. But what kind of gifts do we bring to our dear Lord? Are they the rarest and choicest that our hearts can find? Or do we put him off with things that are of but trifling value to us?

Forget not that he has given, and is ever giving to us, the best things in his universe. He gave his best blood to ransom us. He brings us the finest gold from heaven's mountains. He gathers for us the sweetest flowers that bloom in heaven's gardens. He plucks for us the rarest fruits that hang on heaven's

trees. He fills our cups with wine pressed from the richest of heaven's purple clusters. He brings us the finest bread from his Father's table. He puts upon our souls the loveliest garments that heaven's looms can fashion.

And yet, is it not true that we keep our best things for ourselves, and give him the things that we will miss the least from our own stores? When our cup runs over we give him the drops that fall from the brim. When we have eaten and are full, we sweep up the crumbs for him. We sip the honey and the sweetness out of our flowers and give him the withered, faded leaves. We keep the bright dollars and give him the pennies. When times are hard and we find it necessary to economize, we begin our retrenchment at the Lord's end of our income. We keep the weeks and give him the minutes. Let us bring him our best. Let us take our dearest things and lay them on his altar. Nothing is too good or too costly to be bestowed on such a Saviour.

You may work obscurely. Your friends may chide you and call you foolish thus to throw away your life. But nothing is wasted

which is given to Christ. No deed is in vain which is done to him. No life is lost which is poured out upon his altar. Gentle words are not lost which are spoken in the homes of the poor and sorrowing. Sweetness is not wasted which is poured into hearts unused to sweetness. Lessons are not lost which are taught with loving patience to the ignorant. Love is not wasted which is poured out amid scenes of bitterness. Beauty is not lost which fades in toil for Jesus. Money is not lost which is given to the Lord. He accepts the smallest deed of love as done to himself. Every lowly service, every self-denial, every beautiful deed of love done to a suffering one, is an alabaster box of ointment broken open to anoint his head and feet. And he will gather up the perfume and keep it sweet and sacred forever for a memorial of you.

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